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A LECTURE ON VEBLEN
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The University of Chicago Press

The Journal of GENERAL EDUCATION

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THE JOURNAL OF
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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Reuben Frodin

It is with a sense of humility that an editor seeks to discharge his responsibility for a periodical in the field of education. Various emotions, pleasures, and annoyances are his as he reads the manuscripts which come to him, solicited and unsolicited. In these manuscripts he sees, partially and imperfectly, the writers. One is a teacher trained as a scientist, who is trying to find new materials with which to teach science and new methods whereby the student participates more directly in finding out what science is. Another is a professor of literature and an academic dean in a small college. Harassed and hurried in trying to keep the shop running, he is concerned with the lick-and-promise approach to the curriculum because of limited manpower. A third is an educational politician, a social scientist who has been busy organizing conferences to "explore" something he calls "functional" education. A fourth writer, a young man beginning his teaching career—or perhaps still a graduate student—is exercised over the problem of international understanding, and suggests a course.

Some of these articles will get published and some will not. This, of course, is as it should be. One might say that there is enough printed material on education already available, after viewing the enormous pile of periodicals, pamphlets, mimeographed reports, and books which crowd the desk each month. There might be a moratorium, but there should not be. There must be attention to new writing and thinking on contemporary problems. There must be continued concern with old books. It is one of the unfortunate expressions of the "either-or" thinking which pervades so many aspects of modern life that critics of the leading exponents of the "great books" have, intentionally or unintentionally, sought to give the impression that the "great bookies" had turned their backs on "reality," had ignored everything written since Freud, or refused to include today's *New York Times* in the reading lists of college courses. The "bookies" come in all shades, to be sure: there are those that hold to a given list of books and that's that; another group holds to the use of "original sources" and "source materials" instead of textbooks; still a third will recommend the use of a "great book" where it is available, an "original source" if manageable, and contemporary and text accounts if they serve the purpose best. The point to be made about the "great bookies" is that they have forcefully brought to the attention of teachers that there remain in the literature of the arts and sciences works of enduring truth, beauty, and goodness which "present human life in such a way as to create a lively and lasting impression of its dignity and worth."[1]

A recent book which has come to hand is an admirable essay on the re-

[1] The phrase is John Macdonald's; see p. 124. of the work cited in n. 2.

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lation of education to the problems of the twentieth century, problems which constitute a threat to the values of our society. The book is called *Mind, School, and Civilization,* written by John Macdonald, professor of philosophy and dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Alberta.[2] Mr. Macdonald uses words sparingly, and in one hundred and twenty-seven pages he has presented teachers with a superb working philosophy of education. The essay creates an intellectual atmosphere by which the task of judging manuscripts and, indeed, of approaching the curriculum through teachers whose training and approach to education are extremely diverse is made easier. One of the manuscripts referred to earlier in this editorial observed in passing that "the curriculum gets less attention in some American colleges than athletics, social life, religion, and extra-curricular activities." Mr. Macdonald's book has a practical aim: it deals with the formal, deliberate education of the college, without, however, forgetting that there are many informal and semiformal influences which are brought to bear on student life. The editor is also reminded of the comment of the head of a small college, with the means to do so, in the process of lifting its intellectual sights: "Well, after we get the humanities, social studies and sciences reorganized, we'll get after philosophy. After all, you ought to give the philosophers a chance." And then there was that lonely character on another small campus, a European-trained philosopher, who said: "... If they [meaning the administration] would only get all the students to take a course in philosophy...." Mr. Macdonald's book is for this administrator and this philosopher.

And, finally, Mr. Macdonald's book is for some boards of trustees of colleges. The editor recently received a letter inquiring about a position from a professor in a liberal arts college. His academic and scholarly record is very good indeed. He wrote:

> So the president was fired, and we now have a business manager–acting president who says nothing. Trustees have taken a hand in revising the curriculum, and we have ratified abandonment of some of the general requirements in the liberal arts. We have also added more work in office practice and applied office practice (!), home economics, etc. Then I have to sit with a straight face and listen to the board chairman's suggestion that I start a course in "understanding the people of the world," and invite the two local ministers . . . to come in and lecture on India and China.
>
> These trustees are not bad men. They are worried about tuition income and the state of the world. They want to put in courses which are supposed to be demonstrably useful, i.e., prepare for a job as directly as possible, and they want the students to know that there are yellow and brown people in the world on whom the United States must depend. Such trustees, however, have forgotten two important things. First, that the continuance of our civilization is bound up with the maintenance of the values which liberal education seeks to teach and, second, that, as trustees of a liberal arts college, it is their duty to employ a president and faculty whose job it is to provide a curriculum and intellectual atmosphere in which the student can learn to practice these values.

Mind, School, and Civilization deals with these values, and in such an appropriate way that it may be politely handed to the inquiring trustee who asks the president: "What are you doing about teaching values?" In a brief recapitulation, Mr. Macdonald says these are the basic interests, or values, on which our civilization rests:

> There are communication and expression, with their essential medium, language. The civilized individual must attain a mastery of language which will enable him to use this tool for its own proper purposes and will render him proof against its abuse. . . . There is the material value—the interest in material satisfactions. . . . There are the values of art, science, philosophy, each with its own special forms. . . . Their maintenance

[2] Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952.

. . . is not just a matter of providing specialists who will devote their efforts to furthering one or another of them. . . . The only way . . . is to produce an ever increasing number of individuals who have been rendered sensitive to these values as a whole. . . .

The object of education . . . is to render the individual sensitive to, or appreciative of, these values. To the extent to which this happens, he is educated. . . . He has acquired a *cultural* education, for he has been brought into living contact with excellence in the form of the highest products of civilized striving. His education is *liberal*, for he has gained insight into the basic factors that determine the nature of the society of which he is a member. His education is *general*, for it is primarily calculated to fit him not for any specific activity but for civilized living generally.[3]

The author's chapters on these values, sketchily referred to in the summary just given, are convincing philosophically and have a judiciously practical bent—as coming from a Scotsman they must. On the practical problem of organizing a curriculum for purposes of general education, Mr. Macdonald writes:

The core of it would be: science, natural and social; art (with literature regarded as essential . . .); philosophy, social-political and general or metaphysical; history, contributing in its threefold way as science, philosophy, and literature; and logic, as a study of scientific method and, more generally, an appreciation of the difference between straight and crooked thinking (which would mean, incidentally, a broader view of this subject than is implied in its traditional affiliation with philosophy).

. . . [S]ound general education . . . depends, in the last resort, on those who happen to be teaching the various subjects. . . . It is sometimes claimed that the teacher's efforts at a liberal approach are defeated by an ingrained narrowness on the part of his students. There is probably truth in this, not because young people are by nature unresponsive to the broader appeal—the contrary is the case—but because their idea of education is likely to be vaguely identified with that of vocational preparation and moneymaking. At the same time, narrowness of outlook and treatment on the part of the teachers is always something to be feared.[4]

Mr. Macdonald's book is a splendid contribution to what I have previously referred to in these pages as speculative attention: participation in an arena of discussion aimed at reducing the tensions of modern society. This arena must exist because teachers and administrators possess the intellectual abilities, and, for the most part, have made the cultural adjustments, to deal effectively with the gusty forces in our daily lives. These forces, which can best be subsumed under the word-phrase "anti-intellectual," plague higher education. And those educators concerned with the collegiate function find themselves in the center of many conflicts in ways which many other professions and, indeed, their academic colleagues in professional and specialized disciplines do not experience. Speculative attention to larger matters among teachers and administrators permits the interchange of ideas, of ideals, and even of worries which, some would have us believe, should not exist in academic groves.

Consider, for example, the discussion in educational and general periodicals over William F. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale*.[5] The discussion was in many ways an unearned increment for what was not a good, or even a workmanlike, book. The book was discussed because it made teachers angry, and an angry teacher, like a politician, has to reach print as soon as he can. There are at least two reasons why the book aroused discussion. First, because an *idea* which motivates and guides the liberal educator was declared hogwash. This is the idea of academic freedom, an idea scarcely reducible to a single-sentence definition precisely for the reason that eludes Mr. Buckley in his whole consideration of his Yale education, that

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 80–81. Italics added.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

[5] Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952.

things are not always black or white. Secondly, because Mr. Buckley seeks to impose on collegiate education at Yale (and, by extension, on all colleges) by dictation to the faculty sets of values which, he says, are the values of Yale alumni. These, of course, are the values of Yale alumni approved by Buckley. Yale will survive, just as they survived the request of William Howard Taft, twenty-five years ago to remove a young professor who had written a searching criticism of the conduct of the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti for the *Yale Law Journal*.[6]

There are many other critics of education who go further than Buckley. It is suggested that there are certain, exact things that teachers can do in their teaching to inculcate certain, exact notions about government, economics, and (depending on what part of the country you are in) race and religion. And then, if teachers are not disloyal, why should they object to tests of conformity?

The editor must close near where he began. Instead of referring to the pile of manuscripts which gave rise to this comment, he invites the reader to the printed articles in this issue of the *Journal*. Here is David Riesman discussing Thorstein Veblen with college students. He is helping the students form and appreciate social and economic values by reference to their readings of Veblen and other "disturbers of the peace" in a social science course. Mr. Macdonald would approve, but would Mr. Buckley? Here are Lawrence Chamberlain and Justus Buchler, of Columbia, batting around some ideas which George Boas had quietly sent to his alumni magazine about what is behind some curriculum revision at Johns Hopkins: the training of the specialist versus the liberal education of a larger body of students. There is room for both views, of course. Nathaniel Cantor discusses the problems of the teacher in a general education program. Solomon Lipp defends the teaching of the language arts suggested by Mr. Macdonald as an indispensable tool for modern men. Jay Williams utters the treasonous belief that "monolithic agreement among teachers of the social sciences, or any field, would be a certain sign of intellectual atrophy," adding, however, that "diversity alone will not guarantee either clear or productive thought." After being a teaching fellow at Harvard for the last three years, Norman Birnbaum views the Harvard social science program, raising in a mature fashion some important aspects of the problems of teaching *and* studying the social sciences. Down the street in Cambridge at M.I.T., Duncan Ballantine describes the efforts of a historian framing a social science course for engineers. He would be interested in Mr. Macdonald's observations on giving the engineer the "liberalizing experience of the humanities."[7] And from Reed College, (where Mr. Ballantine soon becomes president), R. F. Arragon writes an essay about the place of reason in historical change. Using a touchstone phrase of Michael Polanyi, the physical chemist turned social scientist—"There is no justification for demanding freedom of thought unless you believe that thought has a power of its own"—Mr. Arragon traces a theme which might well serve as a unit of study in a course in history, the social sciences, or philosophy in a program of general education. And, finally, in the first article of the issue Robert C. Pooley brings into focus some of the controversy which has resulted from the traditional approaches of the teachers in arts colleges and the approaches of the general educationalist of the large universities. One should recall Mr. Macdonald's linkage of *cultural*, *liberal*, and *general*. These approaches together, he says, designate what he means by education.

[6] "Cross Examination To Impeach," *Yale Law Journal*, XXXVI (January, 1927), 384–90. See E. M. Morgan and Louis Joughin, *The Legacy of Sacco and Vanzetti* (New York: Viking Press, 1949).

[7] Macdonald, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

THE RELATION BETWEEN LIBERAL ARTS AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Robert C. Pooley

SIDNEY HOOK has said recently: "I take it we all agree that general education, if it is worth giving, is *also* liberal education."[1] A few years earlier the *Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education* stated that "general education is liberal education with its matter and its method shifted from the original aristocratic intent to the service of democracy."[2] Passing over for the present some highly controversial terms in the latter definition, I would point out that these two definitions, which are quite widely quoted, greatly oversimplify the relations between liberal and general education and express what is more nearly a pious hope that the description of a current fact. I shall take as my position, without attempt at exact definitions, that the term "liberal education" is the name of one set of educational ideas and practices, that the term "general education" is the name of another set of educational ideas and practices, and that the relationships between these two sets of ideas and practices as they now exist and as they can be made to take shape in the future constitute one of the most important and hopeful problems of American higher education. Each has a set of values to contribute to the other; there is no way to predict at the moment whether the exchange of these values will result in a harmonious partnership or a fusion of identities. What really matters is the preservation of the values of each.

I begin our consideration of relationships by a summary of what liberal education and its present programs of study can contribute to general education. I shall dodge the issue that liberal education always has had in it some of the goals of general education; the history of the general education movement is dramatic testimony to the fact that in our institutions of higher learning, in recent years at least, the programs of liberal education had subordinated or deserted these goals. What, then, does liberal education contribute to general education? It offers that which man has found good. In our Western culture liberal education is the essence of centuries of distillation of human experience: in knowledge, in ideals, in patterns of behavior. A British educator, C. R. Morris, the vice-chancellor of the University of Leeds and editor of the *Universities Quarterly*, said in a recent broadcast over the BBC: "A man needs for his own happiness and spiritual health constant experience of the great works of the human mind, and of the great workings of human nature in daily

[1] Sidney Hook, "General Education: Its Nature and Purposes," in *General Education in Transition*, ed. H. T. Morse (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951), pp. 68–82.

[2] *Higher Education for American Democracy: Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947), I, 49.

Mr. Pooley is Professor of English and Chairman of the Department of Integrated Liberal Studies in the University of Wisconsin. *His paper derives from remarks at the St. Louis section meeting of the National Society for the Study of Education, February 23, 1952, on the occasion of the presentation of the society's* Fifty-first Yearbook, *Part I of which is entitled* General Education (*Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952*).

life. We all need, for our own salvation, to meet good people, to read great books, and to see and hear great works of art. Continuing enjoyment of goodness and greatness is essential to us in our youth, and at all times of our lives." I have chosen this quotation because it expresses simply and effectively what the liberal arts at their best can offer to the student at college as a plan of study and to the adult after college as a way of life. Moreover, this statement makes provision for the constant interplay of past and present in human experience which is essential to a sound liberal education. Mark Van Doren puts it this way: "The medium of liberal education is that portion of the past which is always present. It consists of the liberal arts, literary and mathematical, because they control thinking whenever thinking is done; and equally it consists of the great works in which meaning has been given to the ideal statement that human life is itself an art."[3]

General education without the heritage of liberal education may be compared to the seed of the parable which fell upon stony ground. It sprang up quickly and flourished for a time, but it lacked roots, and when assailed by the heat of the sun it withered and perished. There is some evidence of this sort of rootless general education. I received recently from a small college committed to a plan of general education a course to evaluate for transfer credit entitled, "Living in Today's World." The readings are taken from what a dear old lady called "Mr. Gunther's insides." The first subjects of study are (and I quote verbatim): "1. A world situation unprecedented in history. 2. What is happening in Korea? History in action. 3. Scientific achievement and moral failure. 4. The whole world is afraid. 5. One World. 6. One world, but now divided into two hostile camps. 7. Russia and the Russians. Why do they act that way? etc." I have confidence that the most avid instrumentalist would question the pedagogical and logical construction of such a course; this kind of "presentism" can defeat the legitimate ends of general education and bring disrepute to the movement. There is more than a hypothetical danger here; anyone who has studied the catalogues of the myriad small colleges (and some not so small!) hastily leaping aboard the general education band wagon may well consider that the wisdom of the ages casts its light but dimly upon some of the courses offered for the alleged education of youth.

If I have been clear thus far, I have urged that general education is not identical with liberal education but that, to survive and perform its service to education, it must be heir to all the wealth of knowledge and wisdom which are the gift of liberal education. This heritage is essential, no matter what philosophy of organization underlies the program of general education.

I turn now to the consideration of what general education can do for liberal education. If the contribution of liberal education to general education is the heritage of that which is good, the gift of general education to liberal education is life, force, energy. The danger to which liberal education is constantly exposed is mummification in its own dust. The apparent danger to general education is to go "tooting off" on its own instrumentalism. Dead wisdom and undirected energy do the world little good; energy directed by wisdom may save a civilization. It is this happy partnership of fresh energy wedded to the heritage of the past which to me constitutes the great promise of general education.

The energy of general education has reawakened liberal education in many ways, three of which I shall attempt to describe briefly: curriculum organization, teaching practices, and relations between faculty and students.

The best friends of liberal education will admit willingly that in recent years

[3] Mark Van Doren, *Liberal Education* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1943), pp. 144–45.

some of the values of liberal education, particularly in its introductory courses, have been overshadowed or almost completely obscured by professionalism. From the example of the sciences, in which a practical progress from elementary materials and skills moves by steady gradation to the more advanced levels, the introductory courses not only in the sciences but also in the humanistic and social fields have tended to become steps in the ladder of professional advancement rather than the introduction to liberal disciplines. The movement which we call "general education" has brought about two very valuable counteractivities.

The first of these is the bringing-together of specialists in a number of fields of learning to consider together what they think constitutes a foundational education for contemporary life. Many such people, eminent scholars in their own fields and with an attitude toward education of the highest sort, have for the first time in such gatherings faced the issue of balance and proportion in education in its relation to competence in a specialized field. The second gain lies in the recognition of a need to determine a common center or a unification of education. Disregarding for the moment by what particular philosophical outlook this center may be determined, the effort to find a unity and a purpose in introductory education at college level has produced, on the one hand, courses in which the contributions of many fields of learning combine to produce the most illuminating aspects of their common contributions to human wisdom. On the other hand, there are produced programs of education in which the parts are related to the whole through an integration of materials and a unification of purpose. Thus fresh life has been brought to liberal education. Its materials, freshly viewed, newly organized, and powered by the energy of a new purpose, have become meaningful in the eyes of students and faculty alike and have been restored to their ancient purpose of liberalizing the mind.

Good teaching is not the monopoly of general education, nor does the organization of curriculum materials into a general education program predict necessarily improved teaching. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that the energy of the general education movement has awakened a new interest in teaching as an art and has brought many scholars to the realization that the consideration of teaching as an art can excite the mind and bring satisfying rewards. The conference on teaching in higher education, held in Chicago in December, 1950, was largely sparked by the impetus of general education. Moreover, the discussions and reports at that meeting revealed that where general education as an idea was under serious consideration by faculties the whole question of teaching was being reviewed with beneficial effects. In the traditional liberal arts, except for a few notable exceptions, the art of teaching has tended to be neglected or ignored through preoccupation with subject matter. The oft-repeated lecture from ancient notes or the dull recitation centered around the textbook assignment is a characteristic all too readily observable in many liberal arts colleges. To this moribund tendency general education brings a new quickening. The instructor who asks himself earnestly, "Why am I teaching this course? How do I assemble the materials for it? Why do I emphasize this factor and not that?" discovers a new perspective in his teaching. He finds he has a mission which was all but lost in custom. What is more, he finds through general education that this mission is closely related to that of his colleagues in other areas and that he can no longer proceed in ignorance of what they are doing. General education brings to liberal education the new life, implicit in Shelley's words:

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!

. . . Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of prophecy!

Finally, and perhaps chief in importance, general education is bringing to teachers and students a new relationship, or perhaps is reviving what was best in the old relationships. Anyone who has visited a considerable number of institutions in which a program of general education operates is struck by the fact that something has happened to teachers and students. When an instructor sits as administrator and guardian of a hoard of knowledge which he doles out in daily allotments to recipients, who must in time, like the servants of the parable, give back what they have received, one kind of spirit prevails. When students plan cooperatively with instructors in the selection and use of the treasures in the storehouse, when they together consider their utility in the current world and their enrichment of the present from the wisdom of the past, another kind of spirit is felt. Professors discover that it is exciting to teach such courses. Students form classes which are stimulating to work with. In contrast with other students, they seem more alert and more vital. If one were to draw a picture of the ideal student in undergraduate courses, the student would have characteristics like these:

He knows exactly why he is taking the course. He is taking it of his own will because in it he finds values which he desires. He performs the work of the course creatively: namely, he reads with his mind and not his memory, he follows the lecturer critically and not abjectly, he discusses for understanding rather than for an examination. What is more, he relates the materials and ideas of the course to what he is studying at the same time and to his past experience, and he emerges from this fusion enriched in his total experience and not in one segment only.

Now it would be absurd to claim that general education produces such students and that liberal education in its traditional forms does not. The point I would make is that where general education has effectively brought its energy to bear upon the materials of liberal education observers agree that more students tend to resemble this ideal than is true of the students in most traditional patterns.

I cannot here emphasize other aspects —the improvement of counseling between teachers and students, the increased utilization of contemporary as well as traditional materials, and the increased use of visual and auditory aids. First among the creative influences of general education is the concern of students with the plan, purpose, and methods of their own instruction, resulting in co-operative efforts of instructor and student toward the best teaching and the best learning possible.

We need not be concerned at present about whether general education is liberal education or the other way around. In American higher education we are concerned with the preparation of youth for effective and successful life in the social, economic, and political environments in which they will find themselves. To my way of thinking, the heritage of liberal education is indispensable to a sound preparation for an effective life here and now, as well as in the future. At the same time I would insist that the compelling force underlying the general education movement introduces an energy and a purpose which can make the liberal disciplines infinitely more effective than they have been for some time. The chapters of the first volume of the National Society for the Study of Education's *Fifty-first Yearbook* seems to me to foreshadow the ideal that I have suggested, namely, that liberal education, energized by the creative spirit of general education, may remake the education of American youth, at a time when energy and wisdom are the means of our survival.

NEW PLANS AT HOPKINS: THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY'S ROLE

George Boas

The Faculty of Philosophy at Johns Hopkins comprises the professors in the departments usually known as the arts and sciences—the arts being all the languages and literatures which are taught at the university plus philosophy, history, and the history of art. The departments to which its members belong are organized into four groups: the Physical Sciences (including mathematics), the Biological Sciences, the Social Sciences, and the Humanities. This grouping is based not merely on differences in subject matter under investigation in the various departments, but also on the methods used to investigate it. Thus it is assumed that a physicist studies neither the same things nor in the same way that a historian of literature studies; that an economist studies neither the same things nor in the same way that a biologist studies.

But at the same time it is recognized that sometimes a problem arises which has not belonged traditionally to any single department. Such subjects as biochemistry, biophysics, comparative literature, the aesthetics of painting or poetry, economic history, the philosophy of science, archaeology, are forced to cross the old departmental lines for obvious reasons. The men and women interested in these things are puzzled by actual problems, and it cannot be expected that they think their problems to be illegitimate simply because names for them did not exist in the older universities. Knowledge progresses by people's seeing a problem where other people have not seen one. As long, for instance, as it was firmly believed that only organisms could produce organic compounds, such a study as biochemistry could not progress. But as soon as urea was synthesized in 1828, the old dogma was overthrown and a new science got under way. A living university must therefore provide for a maximum of plasticity in its curriculum, must be ready to encourage the investigation of new problems whether there are chairs or departments or names for the field involved or not. That is one of the reasons why we have grouped the members of the teaching staff as indicated. It is hoped that the groups will provide for closer association between the members of the faculty and stimulate inter-departmental studies.

But the looser organization of the Faculty of Philosophy is not the only benefit to be foreseen from our new plans. There are dozens of equally legitimate ends for higher education. The old-fashioned liberal college, the vocational college, the professional school, the agricultural college—these and many others are not to be denounced because they all have the name "college" and yet do not pursue the same program. That they are called "colleges" is to be explained on historical grounds, not on logical. One might just as well expect the College of Cardinals, Balliol College in Oxford, Harvard College, and the Electoral College all to be similar because of their names.

The Johns Hopkins University has chosen as its own goal one of the many

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Mr. Boas is Professor of the History of Philosophy in the Johns Hopkins University. His paper is reprinted with permission from the Johns Hopkins Magazine, *III (February, 1952), 2–4, 32.*

legitimate ends of higher education: the training of scientists and scholars, people who engage in research which, it is hoped, will be distinterested. Such people must above all things be acutely aware of problems when they arise, and consequently their training must orient them towards spotting the unusual event, the event which is an exception to the rule. It is admitted that no one knows how to train the creative imagination, but we do know more or less what impedes its functioning. We know, for instance, that a Charles Darwin, a Freud, an Einstein, a Willard Gibbs simply could not arise in a society governed by the principles of authority and tradition. I do not say that in some societies, like the monastery and the army, tradition and obedience to it are not essential to the common good. But I do say that in the society of scholars the original mind, the recalcitrant individual, the man who looks for himself and stubbornly refuses to accept the word of authority merely because it is that of an authority, is the man who contributes something to the sum total of knowledge.

If that is so, then the problem of the educator in such a university is first of all to admit to his society only such people as have shown a genuine interest in discovery. He must surround himself, in the second place, with scholars who have already achieved—or show promise of achieving—a position of eminence as creative scholars. The professor who gives standard courses out of textbooks may do a good job of teaching in certain kinds of colleges; but he has no place here. In the third place, the student must be regarded not as an empty mind into which the teacher is to pour his accumulated wisdom, but as an associate with his teachers in the acquiring of knowledge. In the fourth place, every effort must be made by the teacher to adjust the program of study to the student's needs, rather than to force the student to take a standardized course of study after which he will be given a standardized degree. And in the fifth place, it must be assumed that some problems have already been solved and become obsolete as problems, that new problems are always arising and are calling for solution, and that finally the teacher in association with his students will stand on the frontiers of knowledge and attempt their solution.

This is, to be sure, the statement of the ideal. None of us has so high an opinion of ourselves that we think we meet that ideal. We are only too aware of our shortcomings. We know that we shall not always be careful enough about admitting the most promising students. We know that we shall fail to give even the best of them the guidance and encouragement which they deserve. But the battle over ignorance and superstition is half won when you see what the problem is, and I think it can fairly be said that we all do see it. We shall have to bring to the University scholars of as brilliant attainment as we can find, and sometimes that takes money. We shall have to improve our library facilities, for no matter how devoted a librarian may be, if he does not have the books he cannot put them at your disposal. We shall have to have more laboratory space. We shall have to use constant vigilance in selecting our students and to house them adequately when they come here.

These and many other problems have to be faced squarely before we can make more than a start towards the accomplishment of our ends. But may I say, without any desire to wave the college banner, that in my experience no other university in this country gives both its students and its teachers more opportunity to accomplish it.

It will be noticed by those who read the University's catalogue that formal and universal requirements have been reduced to a minimum. The General Assembly, which is composed of all the professors, associate professors, and assistant professors in the Faculty of Philosophy,

has voted a minimum residence requirement of one year for any degree. It is unlikely that a man could enter the University from prep school and obtain a Ph.D. in one year. But at the same time provision must be made for the genius. Moreover, no lower degree is needed in order to proceed towards the higher degrees. It is again unlikely that many prep school graduates will be acceptable as candidates for one of the higher degrees, but again, as under the Goodnow Plan, students after one or two years in the University may very well show such aptitude for one of the sciences that they will prove acceptable for such candidacy. President Ames once pointed out that in his day most of the important work in physics was being done by men under thirty-five. There have often been young men who have been outstanding successes in mathematics and logic. Should such people have been retarded because they had not been through a prescribed course of study which was originally devised for quite different ends? What would a man like Fermat have gained, and what would the world have lost, had he been obliged to complete 124 points in modern languages, history, one laboratory science, economics, and so on? Such people are not the average. But on the other hand the Johns Hopkins University does not exist for the average man but for the exceptional man.

The average man will not be able to take an advanced course in one subject and an elementary course in another. He will have to proceed on the same level of difficulty in all his studies. And that is precisely what happens in the average university. But if we are planning to train the exceptional man, then we must develop an exceptional curriculum for him. Hence if he is outstanding in mathematics and poor in French, and if he needs French in order to be a better mathematician, then he should be permitted to take advanced courses in mathematics and elementary courses in French.

The question must always be raised of whether the standardized curriculum of the liberal college and its derivatives has an absolute value in itself regardless of whether its students need the material offered in its courses or not. Here there is a great difference of opinion, a difference which is perhaps justified. We hear a great deal nowadays about "general education," which is presumably what every man should know regardless of his major interests. The words "every man" cover a lot of people. Was Isaac Newton every man? Was Archimedes? Was Vergil? Was Shakespeare? The works of all four of these men show astonishing gaps as far as knowledge is concerned. It would be hard to think of any single individual who did more to modify our language and even our thoughts than Shakespeare, and yet his ignorance even of the science of his own time is astonishing. On the other hand, even admitting his poetic genius and eliminating it from the argument, his knowledge of the human psyche is equally astonishing. Newton, when he was not doing physics, could be as superstitious as a fisherman. Vergil thought that bees were generated from rotting beef. There is no evidence that Archimedes knew anything other than physics and mathematics. All four were narrow specialists. How absurd it would be to maintain that they all should have had a more complete education including so many units of this and so many of that!

I am confident that none of us believes that we know how to produce Vergils and Shakespeares and Newtons, but we do know something about how not to produce them. We know that authoritarianism, for instance, will kill any genius, that the regime of conformity will stifle all originality. We are pretty well convinced that only the most flexible of systems of education will stimulate men to their best work. In a laboratory a man may be turned into a skill-

ful technician by copying his teacher's methods, and in a literature course a man may easily become a learned pedant by repeating all his master's judgments. It is the easiest thing in the world to freeze knowledge at some point, and very successful attempts have been made to do this. Textbooks, for instance, can formulate information in so persuasive a manner that the innocent student may actually believe that what they contain is not only the truth but the whole truth, whereas it is merely that part of the truth which their authors happened to know. Our purpose at the Johns Hopkins University, if I understand it, has been to thaw out these frozen lumps of information by the simple techniques of encouraging our students to ask "Why?" The ability to ask "Why?"—to see when it is appropriate to ask it—is something more precious than any amount of information, most of which can be found in reference books anyway. If one is teaching a dull and passive mass of protoplasm, one will never drag any curiosity out of it. But such masses ought not to be in the Johns Hopkins University, and it is hoped that if any drift into it they will be swept out before they have corrupted the rest.

The next question which arises is why the new plans will not produce narrow specialists. How narrow a specialist should be to be a good specialist is something about which I should hesitate to legislate. But on the other hand, it ought to be admitted frankly that we cannot provide general education at the same time that we are educating productive scholars. It is not our purpose in the Faculty of Philosophy to be all things to all men, and the more clearly our aims are defined the better. To be a great scholar of any literature, to take but one example, requires a lifetime of work. The great Shakespearean scholars were known for their work on Shakespeare, not for their work on the Victorian novel. But at the same time they had to know a great deal more than the text of the plays of Shakespeare. One has only to consult the Variorum Edition of the plays to see how much its editor knew, how far he had to travel from the text to obtain his knowledge.

Again, a man who wants to become a student of Greek philosophy has not only to read the fragments and extant works of the philosophers, but to read them in Greek if he is going to do important work upon them. Since some of the most important fragments are interpreted through Latin and late Greek commentaries, he has also to be able to read Latin and late Greek. But in order to know what, for instance, Plato is criticizing in some of his dialogues, the student has to know Greek history, not only political and military, but also cultural. And he must also know something about Greek science, for otherwise he will not understand so important a dialogue as the *Timaeus*. Again, he cannot understand the *Apology*, the *Republic*, and the *Laws*, unless he knows Greek law. And since the main figure in almost all the dialogues is Socrates, he will also have to know a good bit about the comic writers who first presented Socrates as a literary figure, as well as Xenophon who is one of our main sources of information about Socrates. But here once more a new problem arises. For if you are to understand the position of Socrates and consequently of Plato in Greek civilization, you have to know about the position of the Sophists.

An outstanding student of Plato actually studies all these and more things. Is he narrow? Is the physicist who knows a good amount of mathematics and chemistry and statistics and probability-theory, to say nothing of astronomy, all of which may be essential to his work, narrow? Finally, is it better for a man to know one field with all its ramifications thoroughly or for him to know a little about a lot of things—most of which by the very nature of the curriculum

have to remain unrelated to one another, and none of which can be more than superficial?

There is one final word which ought to be said about the importance of this philosophy of higher education in our own time. If ever occidental civilization was in need of active and creative minds, that time is now. We are threatened by a resurgence of authoritarianism from both right and left. Discouraged men and women seem bewildered by the rapidity of change in social and cultural traditions. Science is moving so fast that even specialists have a hard time keeping up with their subjects. The arts are so dynamic that some of them have become almost unintelligible. The result is that in their discouragement people ask for—and receive—authoritarian judgments of right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, true and false, which are easy substitutes for thought.

But the problems of today can no more be answered by the solutions of yesterday than the wars of today can be fought with the weapons of the last war. There is need of some university which stands, as we suggested above, on the frontiers of knowledge, its members always searching and exploring and —they hope—discovering. Such are the people who can say *No* to both extreme right and left, who have the best answers both regarding what to preserve and what to reject from the past. That is the kind of university which we are trying to build.

SPECIALIZATION OR GENERAL EDUCATION?

Lawrence H. Chamberlain and Justus Buchler

In his article, "New Plans at Hopkins,"[1] George Boas defines certain principles henceforth to govern those departments that constitute the Faculty of Philosophy. "The Johns Hopkins University has chosen as its own goal one of the many legitimate ends of higher education: the training of scientists and scholars...." At Hopkins, in the Faculty of Philosophy, "formal and universal requirements have been reduced to a minimum.... It is unlikely that a man could enter the university from prep school and obtain a Ph.D. in one year. But provision must be made for the genius... no lower degree is needed in order to proceed towards the higher degrees." In general, according to Professor Boas, "the Johns Hopkins University does not exist for the average man but for the exceptional man."

It is not our purpose to appraise the plans of the Johns Hopkins University. We should have to know many more details than Professor Boas' interesting article is able to supply and beyond that to have observed the plans in operation for an adequate period of time. Nor is it our purpose to pronounce on the total viewpoint expressed by Boas. We wish rather to comment briefly, by way of initial reaction, on certain of his key statements and perhaps to suggest questions or considerations which necessarily arise in the larger context of such statements. In so doing we inevitably express a bias of our own, which happens to reflect our experience at Columbia College.

> The problem of the educator in such a university is first of all to admit to his society only such people as have shown a genuine interest in discovery.

This principle is intended by Professor Boas to apply to all who enter the university society—to students and to staff members. Every college has, of course, the right to determine what the composition of its student body shall be and what the basis of selection shall be. But not every criterion of selection is clearly defined or consistent with itself. Presumably a university which seeks only potential scholars cannot do otherwise than look for students "who have shown a genuine interest in discovery." Shall we go, then, to those schools in which we expect to find such students? It may be wise, but it hardly seems fair, to concentrate on good schools as the clue to finding good students. There are bad students in good schools and good students in bad schools. Woe to the boy or girl born in the wrong area of the country or the world. At Columbia we are not overly sanguine about how to find out exactly who are the promising students. We think there are many possible indications of who might *profit* from the type of offering in the college. The college which aims to admit only potential scholars assumes that scholarly potentialities manifest themselves authoritatively on the precollegiate level. We have found at Columbia that scholarly interests are

[1] Above, p. 161.

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created and potentialities *awakened* by a varied and intellectually exciting curriculum in the first two years. Some students with good high-school records have turned out to be "flashes in the pan"; others from whose early records nothing would have been predicted have developed strong drives toward continued study.

Professor Boas is impatient with the student who appears to be intellectually dormant. "If one is teaching a dull and passive mass of protoplasm, one will never drag any curiosity out of it. But such masses ought not to be in the Johns Hopkins University, and it is hoped that if any drift into it they will be swept out before they have corrupted the rest." Apparently there is an original sin of quiescence. It may be well and good to sweep students out—but will we first try to help them? Our own choice at Columbia College is not for a society of the elect but for a society that will fulfil the good students and better the weak ones.

There is another angle to the problem of the potential scholar. The modern student lives in a world of unprecedented stresses, strains, and demands. Whatever scholarly capacity he may have will emerge only under certain conditions. No one at present can generalize securely about the effect, for instance, of emotional factors on scholarly inclinations. But it is fairly certain that *some* promising students can be thwarted by excessively one-sided conditions of development. In a college, study takes place under social auspices, however individualized the pattern of study. The college is perforce a community, even if it be a cloister. It would seem that in any community certain values besides intellectual challenge ought to be present. Intellectual development can be guarded as well as nurtured by circumstances of friendly association, informal guidance, and the minimization of tense competitiveness. Those who think that scholarship will out, no matter what, are a little naïve.

> If [a student] is outstanding in mathematics and poor in French, and if he needs French in order to be a better mathematician, then he should be permitted to take advanced courses in mathematics and elementary courses in French.

Professor Boas makes it appear that an arrangement which would permit an individual student to take advanced courses in one subject and elementary courses in another is either rare or is wanting in "the average university." Such latitude, however, has been widespread since the early twenties. Among the domains in which Columbia College pioneered after World War I was the placement examination, designed to "place" the student on the proper level of study in the natural sciences, English, or foreign languages. The widely varying standards of prep schools, which made the same grade mean different things on different student records, necessitated a uniform standard of evaluation. Significantly, however, placement examinations were given, and have since been given, to the student *after* his admission to the college. The college does not wish to penalize students for having had limited schooling opportunities. Since 1929, the college has also, through the medium of "achievement tests," permitted students whom a prescribed course threatened to retard to apply for examinations in the course material.

> The student must be regarded not as an empty mind into which the teacher is to pour his accumulated wisdom, but as an associate with his teachers in the acquiring of knowledge.

We like this statement, because it is so reminiscent of the educational approach that has built latter-day Columbia College. This approach was expressed in detail by such early Columbia teachers as John Dewey, Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, George E. Woodberry, and John Erskine. It was the basis for the development of the interdisciplinary courses that began in 1919 and that emphasized the

importance of small group discussion. Collaborative inquiry among colleagues has ever since remained continuous with common inquiry in the classroom.

We hear a great deal nowadays about "general education," which is presumably what every man should know regardless of his major interests. The words "every man" cover a lot of people. Was Isaac Newton every man? Was Archimedes? Was Vergil? Was Shakespeare? . . . All four were narrow specialists. How absurd it would be to maintain that they all should have had a more complete education. . . . None of us believes that we know how to produce Vergils and Shakespeares and Newtons, but we do know something about how not to produce them. . . . We are pretty well convinced that only the most flexible of systems of education will stimulate men to their best work.

When one describes "general education" as "presumably what every man should know," one conveys the impression of factory-like training, of deadly homogeneity, of mass packages of knowledge distributed to patiently waiting students. Professor Boas, throughout his article, speaks indifferently of "the standardized curriculum," "courses out of textbooks," "frozen lumps of information," and "general education." This is not surprising, for "general education" has become all things to all men. At Columbia we prefer to think, not of "what every man should know," but of the experiences and methods that we have found to be conducive to literacy and to the urge for further understanding. The two-year sequences in contemporary civilization, humanities, and natural science are intended not as tools of omniscience but as *stages in the student's preparation*, both for further scholarly study and for meaningful participation in society. They are equally intended as intrinsically valuable educational experiences which all students should have the opportunity to acquire. Professor Boas surely does not think that the scholar comes straight from the womb: he needs preparation and stimulation. An interdisciplinary, foundational curriculum *extends* this preparation beyond high school and at the time when the human animal can perhaps best profit from it.

Broadening the student's imagination is not incompatible with deepening it. Ideally, the two processes should be indistinguishable. General education and scholarly study can coexist and overlap. The junior and senior years at Columbia allow virtually complete freedom by the student to elect courses suitable to his needs and desires. There is no "majoring system." The student may focus intensively on one or two or three disciplines or create a unique constellation of studies. The only requirement is that he elect courses of an advanced character predominantly, whether in the college or in the graduate schools. After the first two years, in which he has become aware of many possibilities and complexities in human knowledge, he may either experiment to find his scholarly direction or pursue a direction which he has already succeeded in defining. We know as little as Professor Boas and his colleagues do about how to produce Newtons and Shakespeares. That problem does not worry us. There are too many other problems that can be dealt with effectively. We do wonder a bit about the statement that such-and-such a university "does not exist for the average man but for the exceptional man." We wonder if it does not inevitably lead to the disdain even of the "exceptional man" in favor of the "really exceptional man," and so on to the quixotic hunt for the Shakespeares and Newtons.

Is it better for a man to know one field with all its ramifications thoroughly or for him to know a little about a lot of things—most of which by the very nature of the curriculum have to remain unrelated to one another, and none of which can be more than superficial?

There is, Professor Boas suggests, a sense in which the true scholar cannot

be narrow. A Plato scholar, for instance, must know the Greek language, Greek history, Greek science, Greek law. But if the true scholar must be aware of ramifications, how is he to be led to them? Granted that his specialized study makes the demand on him for further study, must he rely solely on supplying his needs *ad hoc*? Might he not early be made aware, through imaginative interdisciplinary reading and discussion, that there are more ramifications in heaven and on earth than conventional fields suggest? The scholar of Plato must know Greek history and science (assuming that we go along with this conventional conception of what a scholar "must know"). But might not a broad foundation have suggested the relevancy of, say, modern anthropology? Or might not the Plato scholar possibly profit from his previous awareness, through study of the humanities, of various versions of Platonism in modern thought and art? We think that the quest for fruitful connections and the sense for ramifications begins with the liberalizing curriculum.

Professor Boas seems to suppose that the student not engaged in specialized study *ipso facto* encounters things "unrelated to one another." The courses that cut across departmentalized areas aim, of course, to guide the student quite otherwise from the very beginning. Professor Boas refers to the "nature of the curriculum" as though all curricula in all colleges were identical. And when he asks whether it is "better for a man to know one field with all its ramifications thoroughly or for him to know a little about a lot of things," he seems to suggest that an academic institution can actually do the former of these jobs for a man. We rather suspect that when a man has approached the stage of getting to "know" anything "thoroughly" he is way beyond a formal academic process of *any* kind. The most that a university can have done for such a man is to help him get there; the least it can do when he gets to such an enviable state is to make him part of itself.

If ever occidental civilization was in need of active and creative minds, that time is now.

Every age and every society is in need of active and creative minds. If there is any need that our time and our society have, it is rather need of an imaginative, critical, informed citizenry. There is no dearth of creative minds today. Yet there never was a time in which creative minds by themselves could make such little impact on the course of events. If we may adapt Whitman, creative minds need creative audiences. Deeper consciousness and greater self-consciousness on the part of large numbers of people, in whatever station, is the current desideratum. The threats of authoritarianism, ideational and political, are not likely to be counteracted by a scholarly aristocracy. They *may* be arrested by a sufficiently large number of reflective men who can assume the enormous responsibilities of the democratic process. The "exceptional" men, being exceptional, are rare. The "average" man becomes important precisely in this period of occidental civilization. Democratic processes need to be transacted by many men, average men. The least that *some* colleges can do is to welcome the average man, and to better the world if only to the extent that they better him.

HISTORY AND THE VIRTUES OF NECESSITY

Duncan S. Ballantine

THIS paper offers some personal reflections upon the nature and uses of historical study, and in particular upon its relation to the other disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences. These reflections arise from three sources: first and directly, out of the practical experience of developing an introductory two-year course in the humanities and social sciences for students in a technical institute; second, from consideration of the intellectual position to which certain long-term trends in historical and other forms of scholarship have brought us; and, third, from observation of some of the practical problems of real life, both in our individual and in our public decisions. It is my conviction that our experience at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is applicable not simply within our particular situation but to liberal education as a whole.

I

M.I.T. is a predominantly scientific and technical institute offering various four-year undergraduate courses of professional education.[1] Most, although not all, of these courses come under the heading of science or engineering. In all cases the professional requirements are such that they absorb approximately four-fifths of the student's time. Concretely, this means that every student at M.I.T. is required to take a minimum of eight term courses in the School of Humanities and Social Studies. Into that slender vessel of eight required terms we must try to pour a liberal education. By that necessity—the pressure of limited time upon the magnitude of the job we had to do—we have been compelled to question seriously the long-accepted canons of the conventional curriculum.[2] We have asked, How best can we use them so as to give the student, first, some sense of man's experience and knowledge of himself and, second, some sense of the intellectual discipline that is involved in the more intensive study of a particular area of knowledge?

At M.I.T. the student's eight terms of nonprofessional education have been divided into two parts. The first four terms are organized as a two-year introductory course, taken by all freshmen and sophomores. During the junior and senior years the student is offered his choice of eight or ten areas, such as history, economics, social relations, literature, and the arts. In one of these areas he normally elects three terms of work, and in another one term of work.

The freshman-sophomore course has thus a twofold objective. It is the only opportunity for the student to see the field of humanities and social sciences as a whole. At the same time, we must try to give the student some knowledge of the elementary concepts, methods, and subject matter of each of the specialized areas which he might elect to study in his junior and senior years. This is to enable him not only to make a more in-

[1] See also Allen A. Gilmore, "The Methods and Concepts of History," *Journal of General Education*, VI (January, 1952), 113–21.

[2] See generally, the *Report of the Committee on Educational Survey*, published under that title by The Technology Press in December, 1949, for background of recent faculty thinking at M.I.T.

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formed choice of his elective but also to do work during those later years more closely approximating the intermediate level. Keeping those two objectives in balance is, of course, not easy, but in one respect, at least, they place a common requirement upon the introductory course. That is, that it should embrace as many of the areas of study as is possible within the time allowed, without producing a bad state of indigestion in the student's mind. We have chosen not to offer the student a little sociology *and* a little economics *and* a little history as separate disciplines. We have insisted that the elements selected from each of the disciplines involved be assimilable into a larger pattern.

The idea of a pattern rests upon a conviction and an assumption. The conviction is that real-life experience is not divided into the separate and specialized compartments that have characterized the departmental approach to learning and, therefore, that knowledge and study —for the lay student at least—must reflect the unity of real experience. The assumption is that—using the criterion of assimilability into a larger whole—our selection of elements from the various separate disciplines would embrace much of what is regarded as fundamental in each one.

With these convictions and assumptions, we began four years ago at M.I.T. to develop a course which would answer the needs I have described. What we have now is still incomplete and far from perfect. But the results we have thus far obtained, particularly in the response of our students, have encouraged us to continue our efforts in the directions laid out.

To a single course embracing history, literature, the arts, and the various social sciences, several objections immediately arise. First, it is asked, How can you cover such a tremendous body of material without becoming completely superficial? Second, it is asked, How—without destroying their integrity—can you combine these various bodies of knowledge, each of which has developed as a discipline, by defining the limits of its jurisdiction and then staying within them? Does not this so-called "interdisciplinary" approach lead, in fact, to no discipline at all? At this point, of course, we have opened the Pandora's box of mutual fears and misunderstandings among the various disciplines. The historian considers the economist's propensity for theory and draws back in alarm. History teaches us how dangerous it is to theorize. The economist looks back at the historian with boredom and contempt. At best he may regard history as a pleasant diversion for his leisure hours. The literature man regards sociology as little more than a conspiracy against the English language, a variant of Gresham's law—bad language driving out good. And the anthropologist strikes terror into the hearts of all by seeming to imply that in the cultural configuration of a primitive, mud-hut village is to be found the answer to the riddle of life. These statements are caricatures, of course, but they reflect some of the honest doubts and scruples of the trained and specialized scholar.

Third, it may be asked, Granting the desirability and the feasibility of all this, where do you find people who are competent to teach it? If a man is to be regarded as trained, does he not have to know quite a bit about something, and does this not preclude his knowing something about everything? Or, it is asked, Where will you find material for the students to read which will do all the things you ask in the integrated way you have in mind?

Finally, when all these and many other questions have been asked, the wise, old scholar will smile and say, "Yes, my dear young fellow, this is precisely what we have been doing all along."

I cite these objections at the start because they refer to real problems in the minds of honest and thoughtful people which must be faced squarely and from the beginning in an undertaking of this kind.

II

How we have tried to resolve these problems and the degree to which we have succeeded at M.I.T. may best be explained by starting with a brief description of the planning of the two-year course. We have begun by first drawing a clear distinction in our minds between the subject matter—the data—and the questions we proposed to ask of it. And we have built up the skeletal structure of the course—the conceptual framework—out of the questions we have to ask rather than, as is usually the case, out of the answers that the data provide.

In selecting and defining our questions, we have gone to three sources. We have gone first to the established disciplines and asked, What are the leading problems concerning man, society, and the relation between man and society, with which your field of knowledge is concerned? From the psychologist we learn that he is concerned with the behavior and personality of individuals and of groups. How, he asks, is personality formed? To what extent is it shaped and conditioned by the society and culture within which it develops?

The sociologist, we discover, is interested in the structure of groups and subgroups and in the network of relations within and between them. More specifically, he is studying the factory, the labor union, the church, the family, the political party, the class and caste. The interests of the anthropologist are closely related and in some cases overlapping. He distinguishes himself from the sociologist by his concern for group behavior and values rather than group structure; but his basic working tool—the concept of culture—is sufficiently broad to include both psychological and sociological factors and, when properly applied, political and economic as well. The close affinity between the interests of the psychologist, the sociologist, and the anthropologist has been manifest in the work of many of these scholars bearing upon the "personality-society-culture" theme.

Turning to literature and the arts—the humanities, strictly defined—much of its concern has seemed to be, in its own way, with problems similar to those of the social scientist, namely, the nature of man and of his relations to his fellowman. There are, of course, other major themes of imaginative literature—man's relation to nature, to fate, to the divine. But where this literature is humanistic, centered in man, there is no insurmountable problem of assimilation.

The technical terminology of the economist is formidable, but the fundamental problems with which he is concerned do not baffle our understanding. As Paul Samuelson has recently stated them, the economist is concerned with the answers to three questions: *What* is produced? *How*? and *For whom*? These questions imply the making of decisions about the allocation of available resources to various possible social uses: to consumption, to new capital investment, to government, etc.

The political scientist, we learn, is concerned with the exercise of power in a society—its sources, degrees, forms, uses, and abuses. Specifically, he is asking questions about pressure groups, public opinion, leadership, and communication and about the working of our various governmental agencies. But the study of public opinion, for example, is in large part a study of cultural norms and group psychology; and in dealing with pressure groups the political scientist is asking in political terms questions closely bearing upon those of the sociologist and the economist. This kind of examination could be continued indefinitely. But from this brief review two points should emerge.

First, if we concern ourselves in the first instance with the problems and questions of the various areas of study rather than with their methods of solving them, we find that they are related,

sometimes identical, parts of a larger unity.

Second, when we consider the methods through which answers to the questions are sought, we discover, of course, that a substantial portion of the concept and technique employed is peculiar to the individual discipline. But we also discover that, increasingly, scholars are having to reach beyond the conventionally defined boundaries of their own fields into the precincts of related disciplines. For example, the answers to the economist's questions—What? How? and For whom?—are in part economic, and for this purpose we must deal with the concepts of national income, equilibrium, the multiplier, and supply-and-demand curves. But they can hardly be answered in economic terms alone. The so-called "economic man," motivated solely by the desire for profit maximization, is a myth. In any real situation the psychological, social, political, and other determinants must be taken into account, and, although these additional data will not necessarily invalidate the economic principles, they will so modify their application in any correct analysis.

This essential unity is brought out with increasing emphasis when we turn to the second source of our questions, the practical world of real experience, against which we test the relevancy of our academic formulations. Even more than the scholar, the practical decision-maker is faced with the necessity of comprehending and dealing with whole situations. Whether he is the Point Four administrator, fighting the battle of productivity versus population increase; the businessman working out his equations between governmental, human, and profit considerations; the voter deciding about foreign policy; or simply the individual, making his personal adjustment to his circumstances, the proposition is almost self-evident that real life-experience observes none of the impassible barriers that have arisen in academic practice.

The third source to which we turn in developing our questions is the record of historical experience. From history we ask a judgment whether the problems we have selected for study have been the fundamental, the timeless and persistent issues of human experience. History here serves as a necessary check against the purely current-events emphasis which might result from referring solely to the world today, just as the world today is the check against those interests of history which are purely antiquarian.

From history we ask also a reformulation of our questions so that they will reflect the dimension of time and of change and continuity through time that is the peculiar virtue of the historical point of view. In brief, to the synchronic approach, which so strongly characterizes the social sciences today, we hope to add something of the diachronic.

From these three sources we develop an extensive body of questions which can be asked of any social group, anywhere, any time. Our next step is to reduce our mass of questions into some systematic and manageable order; for, granting that we are dealing with a unified whole, we still cannot study and teach everything at one time. We have therefore selected five headings: "Personality," "Society," "Economics," "Politics," and "Culture," under which we might classify and group our questions and to which we might refer the various disciplines as they are directly concerned.

Let me say in passing that there is nothing sacred about these particular categories or terms. The list might be longer or shorter; other terms might serve equally well or better. These are simply a kind of shorthand that we have found useful.

What is most important, however, is the use of these headings for cross-indexing purposes. Thus, for example, in dealing with personality, we ask how it is affected by social, cultural, economic, or political factors, and so on—each in turn being placed at the center. Not every such cross-reference bears fruit,

but we have here a useful check list, which enables us to explore potential links and, not least important, often uncovers possibilities for research.

III

I am aware that thus far I have suggested very little of what, concretely, we teach. But I believe that some such process of thinking as I have tried to describe is a prerequisite to laying out a course in concrete terms. In fact, in any introductory course of this kind which is not to be wholly superficial, like the old survey, i.e., in which you must select certain periods and exclude others, I know of no way to go about it unless you have some notion of what you are selecting them for, what you want them to do. In the M.I.T. course the criteria for selecting some historical and contemporary situations and not others are the questions we have developed.

Thus, to illustrate political behavior, we turn to Athens, the making of the American Constitution, the New Deal, and Soviet Russia. To look at economic development, we take up the British, American, and Russian cases. To observe the emergence of new personality—new attitudes and values—we follow the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. In each case, it should be understood, although the focus of the question may be political, economic, or cultural, we try to see the impact of the whole situation upon the point in question. For this purpose we use the cross-indexing device that I have described.

In the time available I think I can give you a better idea of how topics are developed, by selecting two examples rather than by trying to catalogue all the questions and illustrative cases that are studied. The first example deals with the more personal, relatively small group; the second, with a larger and impersonal situation.

In the first term of our course we study the local community. The communities used as illustration are primarily American of the present time, with some contrasting examples from primitive and other cultures.

How, we ask, are these communities organized and how do they function with regard to work, government, social mobility, religious life, education, and other essential activities? As each new question is raised, we ask the student to apply it to his own home community. Very early in the term, for example, we deal with the formation of personality, and we ask the student to write about how his own personality was influenced by his environment—his family, neighborhood, class, school, a job, church, and other associations. What he is capable of saying at this stage is not very profound, but the effort of trying to say it—of trying to define his personal relationship to these elements of his environment—makes them more meaningful to him and secures his interest.

In doing this he has also begun to call into service some seventeen years of living experience. Above all, that experience is being raised from the level of "taken for granted" and transformed into an objective, intellectual perception.

In the weeks that follow we take up, in turn, those elements of his environment which he first encountered in a personal way and develop them in a more rounded and less personal form. To them we add factors like political and economic life and organization, with which he probably had less contact in his youth. We continue, however, to call upon his knowledge of his own community, and we let the students learn from one another in class discussion both the varieties and the similarities which exist in American communities.

The student's knowledge of his own community is not, however, inexhaustible. Nor do we wish him to study the problems of community life solely in terms of a single example. In his assigned reading we give him, therefore, a wide variety of illustrative material—novels, history, community analyses, in-

dustrial relations studies, and personal narratives. They include Lloyd Warner's "Yankee City series," Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt,* Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa,* Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* and Richard Wright's *Black Boy.*

By the end of the term the student has worked through his own community in small segments and has also had vicarious experience through his reading and discussion with a wide range of other situations. Against this background we ask him in a long paper to take a whole view of his community, not simply a cumulative description but in terms of a problem requiring a judgment. One question that might be asked him is this: To what extent does your community offer the fullest possible opportunity for the development and expression of an individual's potentialities?

I need not recount the various answers that are possible from students living in large cities, suburbs, small towns, the South. What matters is that the student cannot properly answer that question until he has reviewed in his mind the essential living structure of his community in terms of people—their aspirations and the chances of their fulfilment.

My second illustration deals with a larger and more impersonal situation, which is taken up late in the second year. It does not, like the first case, embrace the work of an entire term, but it does, as I shall show, call upon other topics that have been studied previously.

This case deals with one of the central problems in the underdeveloped areas—the relation between population growth and economic production. Many of these countries are now on the threshold of rapid population growth, comparable to what occurred in western Europe and America after 1750. Death rates are beginning to fall; birth rates are remaining high; and even cautious estimates point in some cases to a potential doubling of population within the next fifty to seventy-five years. In India this would mean a jump from around 400 million to 800 million. Unless these peoples are to be subjected to the operation of Malthusian checks and restraints upon population growth, attended by intolerable suffering and explosive political consequences—i.e., unless there is to be simply the same poverty for more people—there must take place a rapid rise in productivity accompanied by a sharp decline in the birth rate.

In taking up this case the student has already studied the examples of economic development in England, the United States, and Russia. He has, we trust, some familiarity with the relation between population, natural resources, technological innovation, capital formation, political, social, and other factors, as they were related to economic growth in those cases. From his study of the Renaissance, the American Constitution, and the American community he has some sense of the traditions of rationalism, materialism, and individualism in Western culture, all of which are relevant to this issue.

Against this historical background we pose the problem of the underdeveloped areas and ask whether from the known conditions, past and present, we can expect developments comparable to those of Europe and America. As industrialism and urbanism intervene, will birth rates fall, and will production increase faster than population?

The student is expected to recognize both the differences and the similarities between the posture of economic, political, and social factors in one situation and the other. Not least important, he must see the relation between social structure and cultural values and the birth rate.

As Notestein describes it:

> The only societies in which low birth rates have appeared are those dominated by the values developed in modern urban life. Such societies set great store by the individual, his health, welfare, initiative, and advancement. They develop a rational

and materialistic outlook on life, view man as the master of his own destiny, and come to hold the deliberate control of fertility to be as reasonable and desirable as that of mortality.[3]

In the underdeveloped areas, on the other hand, Notestein asserts:

> Family form and function, religious doctrine, and community custom are all focused toward the maintenance of high fertility. High evaluations are placed on the perpetuation of the family, clan, or other group. . . . These values are deeply imbedded. . . . Even under the impact of a rapidly shifting environment, they change only gradually.[4]

Thus we are led to examine the social structure and cultural pattern of a country like India or China, until we can return to our original question with the knowledge necessary for an informed judgment. This should be for the student a demonstration that the solution of a demographic and economic problem may have to be sought in cultural and historical terms.

IV

I have indicated enough perhaps to raise the question, What does a historian have to do with all this? Can he participate in this kind of study and teaching without doing such violence to his own professional canons as to cease to be a historian? Can he participate in general education without serious injury to his professional career? To both these questions I believe the answer can be "Yes."

With the historian who is unreservedly an antiquarian I am not here concerned. He should have our blessing and our respect, for there is something of him in all of us. But those historians whose response to the past is utilitarian as well as aesthetic must think hard about the ways in which history can be useful. You may already have guessed that I believe it can be useful in collaboration with other disciplines. It remains only to inquire whether this is possible, whether this must carry the stigma that "collaborationist" has come to have in political activity.

The prescribed canons of the historical profession can be succinctly stated. They include (1) all those rules for establishing factual authenticity that Professor Gottschalk has recently adumbrated; (2) the holistic belief that all the facts are essential to the understanding of any one of them; (3) objectivity; (4) a habit of constant reference to the so-called "empirical reality"; (5) a belief in the uniqueness of every situation; (6) the sense of the time dimension, of change and continuity, to which I have referred earlier. But, as we reflect upon these various canons, we must ask ourselves whether they are, for the most part, monopolies of the historical profession. Authenticity of data and objectivity in their interpretation, holism, and empiricism at least would appear to be revered by other social scientists as much as by historians. Indeed, one wonders whether these are not the qualities of *any* trained and critical mind.

The sense of the time dimension is, however, the property of the historian alone, and it is the gift he can bring to the social sciences, of which they stand most direly in need.

But it does not follow that, if history can do certain things for the social sciences, it would be accepted by them or, if accepted, would accomplish the desired ends in the form in which it is now so often written. The difficulty with much contemporary historical writing and the attitudes that underlie it are well characterized in the opening remarks of a book review in one of the recent historical journals. "This," says the reviewer, "is

[3] Frank W. Notestein, "Problems of Policy in Relation to Areas of Heavy Population Pressure," *Demographic Studies of Selected Areas of Rapid Growth* ("Proceedings of the Round Table on Population Problems . . . April 12–13, 1944" [New York: Milbank Memorial Fund, 1944]), p. 146.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

the kind of a monograph that delights the historian. It is clear, explicit, and concise. It refrains from moralizing and indulges in almost no generalizations."

We must recognize that many of the social sciences have only recently become emancipated from control by the historical—or, as they view it, the purely descriptive—method. Their status as analytical sciences, they consider, is in part dependent upon this emancipation. Let us also recognize that the first task of history is description. But must we stop there? Must the canons of history be only those of a fact-finding craft concerned with the uniqueness of fractions of human experience, as so often it appears to be in the Ph.D. thesis and—with rare exceptions—in the pages of the *American Historical Review* and other professional journals? Clearly not. To conclude so would be to exclude from this profession two of the historians who have most profoundly influenced the professional and the public mind—Turner and Mahan.

Most of us would agree that, if fact-finding is the essential first step of history—as it is of any social science—its ultimate goal must be the determination of meaningful relations between the facts. And if this much can be agreed, then I believe that there is more nonsense than substance in the supposed conflict between the historical and the analytical method, between history and theory.

I am not speaking now of the Hegelian or Marxian concept of theoretical law as a force, *ex ante* shaping events, but of theory as a generalization, *ex post*, of observable data. Most of us will admit that history can serve as a discipline for theory, as a place to test, refine, or refute it against the so-called "reality" of the observed fact. But are we willing to acknowledge that theory can be a useful discipline of fact? Facts may be absolute, but the historian's facts are not. It requires no great sophistication to recognize that, in building his image of the past, the historian selects some facts and rejects others and that his selection is governed by certain criteria, hypotheses, and questions whose solution he seeks. And yet we do not require that he be at least literate in the theory of the subject to which many of his hypotheses and criteria must refer.

I suggest that if we would make greater use of the social scientist's analytical constructs—not as universal laws but as definitions of problems whose solution is a common task—we would find that many of the hobgoblins that have beset us will evaporate into thin air.

Turning, now, to the practical questions I have posed regarding persons qualified to teach general education, reading materials, and the effects upon a professional career, overspecialization in graduate training is a serious, but not an insuperable, handicap to securing qualified teachers for general education. At M.I.T., mainly because of the previous constitution of our staff, we have relied principally upon historians and literary men. Recently we have been able to add to the course staff persons trained in economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science, and the benefits derived from their co-operative effort have been outstanding.

I do not believe there is any substitute for this on-the-job training in general education, but I would raise seriously the question whether, in view of the increasing numbers of history graduate students who will be expected to double in general education, more emphasis should not be put in the graduate schools upon cross-fertilization of ideas and less upon narrow specialization. Graduate seminars and graduate theses might deal less with the narrowly defined and "informational" type of problem and more with the kind of cross-disciplinary problem I have tried to suggest here. Indeed, the inclusion of students from several disciplines in a single seminar directed by members of several

different departments and dealing with a problem of common interest, might be more widely practiced. This kind of project is now under way in graduate study at Yale and is shortly to be attempted at M.I.T. with undergraduate honor students.

Such co-operative projects should not, moreover, be regarded as useful only for the teacher of general education. More and more, as we look about us, we find that significant upper-level research is being undertaken in the form of co-operative or interdisciplinary projects. The Center for International Studies at M.I.T.; the Russian research centers at Harvard, Columbia, and elsewhere; the recently formed Center for Research in Economic Development and Cultural Change at Chicago are but a few examples. In turn, such developments in research are profoundly encouraging for the teacher of general education.[5]

There is one other point I should like to make in this connection. I believe this kind of general or introductory level education to be sufficiently important to command some part of the time of the ablest scholars in the academic profession as a whole. There should exist a constant and close correlation between the directions that are being taken at the advanced levels and those that are taken at the introductory levels.

But, when all this has been said, I must add the necessary caveat. Interdisciplinary study does not imply that we abandon completely the identity and integrity of the individual disciplines. The problems that are posed are not to be solved by making historians out of sociologists and sociologists out of historians—by developing an undifferentiated and undisciplined kind of dilettante in the humanities and social sciences. My plea for general education as a beginning of study is based upon the assumption that it will be followed by more intensive and specialized study in later years. My invitation to the historian or other specialist to participate in general education and in joint research is based upon the assumption that he will remain primarily a historian or whatever he may be. My conviction is that he will be a better historian, economist, or sociologist as a consequence.

I have in this paper tried to define three kinds of interdiscipline or mutual interaction. There is, first, the process of mutual discipline between the academician and the practical citizen or decision-maker. There is, second, the process of mutual discipline between the descriptive and the analytical studies, between history and theory, between the synchronic and the diachronic. There is, finally, the necessary correlation between the various levels of teaching and research.

It has been said so often of late that we are at a major turning point in scholarship and education that there is little profit in simply repeating the old charges against specialization and departmentalization. The task before all of us—and it will be with us for some decades to come—is to find out *how* to develop a capacity for dealing with whole situations without losing the benefits gained from specialized scholarship. This is, at least, what we have been groping toward at M.I.T. in the work of our introductory courses. Introductory courses are not in themselves going to solve the problems of general scholarship. Conversely, however, consideration of these larger problems might be of great help in designing the introductory course, and it has been the compensatory virtue of our situation that we have been compelled in this direction.

I can only speculate on how widely our experience may be applicable. Cer-

[5] Cf. "Editorial Comment," *Journal of General Education*, V (January, 1951), 89–90, and the articles referred to in that issue of the *Journal*.

tainly, in junior colleges, particularly those whose students go on to senior colleges, and in schools where professional study is emphasized the situation is closely analogous to that of M.I.T. But in every case I believe that it is desirable to emphasize the question rather than the answer. It is an aid to seeing problems as a whole. It is an aid to learning motivation. And who knows—equipping students with questions rather than answers might even send them out into later life with a little stronger feeling that a college education is something that they *have* with them continuously, not something they *have had.*

THE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

Jay Williams

THOSE concerned with the development of general education courses in the social sciences frequently encounter the criticism, either from English visitors or Americans emerging momentarily from the more protected sectors of university life, that their efforts are confused. The ground of this criticism is the obvious fact of diversity both in the superficialities of course arrangements and in the descriptions by teachers or theorists of what it is that social science education should accomplish. This criticism as it derives from differences in course arrangement alone can certainly be dismissed, but as it derives from differences in definition of the task of the social sciences it must be taken account of.

Such diversity in definition, it may be answered, will be confusing only to those who have failed to ask themselves important questions either because of inertia or of dogmatism. Diversity is indispensable to inquiry, because without it there are no problems. Monolithic agreement among teachers of the social sciences, or any field, would be a certain sign of intellectual atrophy. But though diversity is no doubt an indispensable condition of thought, diversity alone will not guarantee either clear or productive thought. Unless there is a modicum of agreement as to what the problems are, the various members of the intellectual community will be conducting soliloquies rather than a dialogue.

Discussions of the task of the social sciences today more often than not take the form of independent and unco-ordinated assertions. What seems to be a problem for one is irrelevant for another. What are taken to be principles and conclusions by one are not so much attacked as ignored. Thus it is not accurate to say that there are problems confronting the profession. Rather there seem to be various more or less disconnected congeries of problems confronting individuals, or at most groups.

Is there some way in which these diverse propositions on social science education could be organized so as to indicate their relations to one another? Is there some point of vantage from which this variety can be viewed to the end of discovering what is at issue? Of course, any systematic philosophy of education is such a point of vantage. From its ground one is able not only to define issues but to accept, modify, or contradict most if not all general propositions about education in the social sciences. But for those who do not accept the philosophy in question, this is a meaningless exercise. Thus it is reasonable to ask: Is there a perspective which does not require prior commitments? Absolutely, no; since presumably any perspective can be denied.

However, there may be a perspective which has strong prima facie arguments and in terms of which systematic philosophies can themselves be discussed. Such a perspective would seem to be making minimal demands. This paper will attempt, first, to describe such a perspective as a hypothesis and then to test, in a sense, this hypothesis by showing how diverse propositions are taken care of by the proposed perspective. "Taken care

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of" not in the sense of being shown to be illusory but in the sense of being given a place in some total picture.

THE HYPOTHESIS

It is proposed that the social sciences in general education possess a number of distinguishable but interrelated aspects, viz.: (*a*) the *objects* studied through the social sciences; (*b*) the *knowledge* arrived at through the social sciences; (*c*) the *operations* by which the objects studied are manipulated so as to get knowledge; and (*d*) the *knower* (the student). In addition, the way in which these aspects are treated and the relations postulated between aspects may receive justification from arguments outside the system.

In this first part, each of these aspects will be examined in turn with the purpose of determining its meaning and its limits. Each of these aspects is a commonplace, and each will be discussed in terms of some commonplaces associated with it. But, as each aspect is discussed, ambiguities will emerge which, it is suggested, are the bases for educational differences.

The *objects* of study in social science courses are often spoken of as "content," and this is usually described in terms of the inquiries of social scientists, disciplines, and problems. But these are clearly not ultimate, since they may be said to be about something. All of them are the *results* of attention directed at some objects. To say that the objects studied are either "society," or "human nature," or "man" carries us too far. Social scientists cannot look at any one of these; they cannot start with any of these high-level abstractions. The things which social scientists deal with are the acts and institutions of men. These are obviously dealt with not as particulars but as kinds. Further, the social scientist's interest is not alone in the recognition and classification of kinds. He wants to know about the relations, and perhaps about the uniformity of relations, between kinds.

Much beyond this point a discussion of the objects of the social sciences confronts unavoidable choices. It is evident that kinds of acts may in varying degrees of uniformity be related to diverse factors, viz., biological, psychological, social, and cultural. Any of these types of factors can be erected into "closed systems," and human acts thus become the data through which the system is investigated. In this case the acts of men are the objects of study only in the sense that they are starting points; what is really studied is something "behind" the data: "human nature" or "culture." But, without denying the reality of these factors, their existence as "closed systems" may be denied. Acts then become not only a means for interpreting systems but a means of changing systems. Resulting propositions will then not be descriptive of uniformities but of various degrees of uniformities and of "problems" and "ends."

This brings us to the next aspect, that of the *knowledge* which may be derived from the objects studied. A characteristic of knowledge is that it can be put into propositions. This distinguishes it from both experience and skill. A man may in a sense "know" either what to expect from people or how to get along with people and yet not have knowledge. Whether or not experience and skill are necessary for knowledge is another question. It is presumably a characteristic of knowledge that it can be taught and in some way be "verified."

One may say that the social scientist has knowledge about "acts and institutions," looking back to the objects dealt with, or more characteristically one may look forward to the results of knowing and say that the social scientist has knowledge about the character or development of a period—an institution, a culture or "culture," or what is correct policy. This suggests that there are different kinds of social science knowledge which might be roughly designated "empirical," "analytical," or "political" (con-

cerned with appropriate means to appropriate ends). Any single work in the social sciences may exemplify all or only some of these kinds or may concentrate on one kind while playing down or omitting the others.

"Empirical" social science is concerned with the gathering of data and its organization on a relatively simple level. Thus the economic practices and institutions of a country could be described, either as they exist at the present or have developed in the past, in such a way as to be satisfactory both to a competent economic liberal and a competent Marxist. Any such descriptions require principles, of course, but these are "open-ended" principles, uncommitted to more thoroughgoing inclusions and exclusions. "Analytical" social science is concerned with the interpretation and explanation of men's acts and institutions. The intent of the scientist is to identify regularities, if not invariabilities, between classes of acts or between classes of acts and determining factors. The "facts" are thus reformulated through the use of principles of broader or narrower scope, which in any one system mutually reinforce one another.

"Political" social science is concerned with the problem of how men should act either in more general terms or in connection with relatively specific circumstances and problems. Inquiry of this kind attempts to establish both what is desirable for individuals, groups, and states and the appropriate means for attaining what is desirable.

Certain ambiguities in this description of kinds of social knowledge are immediately evident and when examined reveal choices co-ordinate, at least in part, with those presented as in the discussion of the objects of knowledge. What, for instance, is the relation between the three kinds of knowledge? Are we dealing here with a continuum when the purposes of the final kind pervade the other two? In this interpretation all social science is "practical," since its guiding principle is intelligent action. Or is the relation reversed, and thus the questions asked by "political" social science answerable only in terms supplied by "analytical" social science? This makes the social sciences "theoretical" with, if you choose, an "applied" dimension.

The *operations* we are concerned with are those by means of which the individual proceeds from ignorance to knowledge. The ignorance is not total: the individual is familiar with certain things, words and general propositions, and thus can grasp some kind of a problem. There must obviously be a problem to start the process, at least in the minimal sense that there is a question entertained by the knower. In an attack on a problem there are elements both of thought and of attention to data. The thought involves the appropriate interpretation, criticism, and formulation of both words and propositions, and these are appropriate as they deal with the "facts."

But here, too, we find ambiguities. What are the "facts" on which "political" statements can dependably be based? Are they in some way derived from the facts revealed by analysis, or do they have a different ground? Are the facts which operations take as their starting point stable, or are they changed by the process of being known, thus making the operation more akin to making than to knowing? In this case the operations would be "on" the data. But the opposite is conceivable, namely, that the operations would be "on" the knower to put him in a position of "seeing" what the data implied. The notion of "insight" reflects this.

Further problems result from the fact that knowledge is in some sense the result of applying words to "things" (even if "things" are taken to be only relations). How does the right "fit" occur? Is the knower able to grasp the truth about the object and then apply the term? Or must it be said that his identification of what the object is must employ the terms already at his command? If the latter is

true, what is the process by which more adequate terms are substituted for the less adequate? Is this simply an intellectual process, or does it involve other changes in the knower?

It is the knower who carries on operations "on" objects to obtain knowledge (whatever the character of each of these). A number of commonplaces may be stated about the knower. He will be in some degree sensitive to the group (however defined) in the midst of which he lives and works. He will have interests, aversions, purposes, and problems. He will have some view of himself, some kind of moral character, some range of experience, some knowledge of the social sciences, and some degree of "native" ability. As a "knower" of a prescribed sort, he will fit into some context in the operation of a culture or a state.

But the meaning of any of these attributes can be developed in different ways, relating the attributes differently to one another and to variations in the interpretation of objects, knowledge, and operations. If, for instance, a strong stand is taken that the individual knows only what his group can help him to know, attention will tend to focus on the processes by which this kind of learning-from-the-group can take place. On the other hand, this kind of learning may be recognized without making it either exclusive or pre-eminent. Alternatively it may be held that, before a student can learn, he must be "set right," for example, understand his own motivations and biases and not be in the grip of certain anxieties or have the proper moral character. Or these processes may themselves be conceived as the whole of learning. Again, the social and political context in which the educated man is viewed as operating after he leaves college may differ radically. It may be described in terms of "what our graduates consider their important problems." These problems may reflect largely the deficiency in the graduates' education. On the other hand, the view taken of the context may be the result of careful thought about contemporary society and Western civilization. The "needs" of students may be talked about in either of these ways. As a result of the first we could expect only the most impoverished discussion of "knowledge" and "operations."

In summary of the hypothesis: It is proposed that social science education is an enterprise which is concerned that the student should master certain operations which will result in knowledge about certain objects. Some of the different ways have been shown in which this proposition may be developed. It is proposed, indeed, that any differences about social science education are differences about the terms in this proposition. Inferentially, too, any discussion of social science education which does not treat of these aspects is an incomplete and therefore an equivocal discussion.

From this point of view much of what is written about existing courses in the social sciences is inadequate. From the customary descriptions of topics and books, lectures and classes, and general attributes of the educated man it is generally difficult to figure out what the education is which the student is receiving.

THE ASPECTS IN ACTION

When we turn to discussions of general education courses in the social sciences, do we find these aspects touched upon, and, if we do, is it of any use to us? First, we will examine a description of a course in "human relations" at Harvard College.[1] We find that the terms in which this course is described may be distributed among two of the four aspects thus:

Operations: "Application of abstractions to concrete data"—"skill in use of knowledge," "deal successfully with people"; "social observation"; "self-insight," reorganization "of way of looking at" self and others.

Student: "Vital questions are constantly

[1] Hugh Cabot and Joseph A. Kohl, "Teaching Human Relations," *Journal of General Education*, V (July, 1951), 303–12.

being raised by students" (*problems* and *interest*); "by directly studying adult men and women, the problems [are discovered] that the students will face after they graduate from college" (eventual *social context* of student as determinant of problems); "the students reorganize their way of looking at themselves and the people around them" (changing the capacities of knower).

At first glance it also appears that we may fill in the other two aspects thus:

Objects: "concrete facts"; "personality"; "group experience"; "human behavior."
Knowledge: "concepts" or "abstractions"—of psychology and cultural anthropology.

But a further examination of the description shows that this would not at all represent the authors' intentions and that the course is not concerned with knowledge in the sense described above. This is made clear in the following:

> . . . Human relations brings together basic concepts and techniques from the several disciplines of social science in order to interpret and deal with particular human beings in their face-to-face relationships.[2]
>
> It [human relations] is a technique for learning how to apply scientific abstractions to concrete data.[3]

This says, rather explicitly, that the results of the operations which the students perform is a skill or art and not knowledge. The course is a process by which students obtain a "feel" which allows them to use the right "abstraction" in analyzing a particular situation and then deciding to act. These "abstractions" have presumably been the consequence of someone's applying a method to data. But in this course in human relations the student is not to examine either these data, this method, or this knowledge. Knowledge is something given which he is to learn to apply. It is true, of course, that the "meaning" of this knowledge would be clearer to the student because of this application. But this would be a "meaning" restricted to its own terms, since neither the broad range of data nor competing "abstractions" are to be brought to bear on it. It is also true that this application would give students a familiarity with theory, but an uncritical familiarity.

It is clear from what has been said that at the center of this course is the idea of "application of abstractions to concrete data," a statement of "operations" in the terms used above. "Concrete data" are particular situations. It is apparent from the article that the situations are to be interpreted, not for the sake of interpretation, but for the sake of choice of actions. The student is to be able to "deal successfully with people." To the notion of an "applied science" then is imputed the capacity to determine purposes. The line of reasoning implied seems to be as follows: The "science" which is applied is in this instance that of "personality" and "small groups"—a science, as has been said before, taken over ready-made from the scientists. "Personality" is a "dynamic whole," and both it and "small groups" contain "factors" and "forces" which determine their operations.[4] In our previous terms, therefore, we are being told not only that there are classes of acts and kinds of determinants whose relation to one another is uniform but that a knowledge of this uniformity is a sufficient ground for policy decisions. Such a proposition raises obvious questions.

When we turn to a description of another course in the same college, we find further issues. The terminology of the description does not allow the relation of the course to the four aspects to be discovered as easily as in our first example. It is stated that the aim of the course is to help students "think systematically about great issues."[5] Topics (in this case, historical) and books are variable means to this end. But issues are themselves

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 307.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 305–6.

[5] Samuel H. Beer, "Social Sciences 2 at Harvard," in *Social Sciences in General Education*, ed. Earl J. McGrath (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1949), p. 4.

means to some kind of knowledge. The article's catalogue of issues makes fairly clear the character of the knowledge at which the course aims. It is a knowledge in which "empirical" or "analytic" elements are oriented to the main concern of answering "political" questions:

> . . . underlying problems of how far social changes are the result of free, conscious decisions.
>
> Can we today satisfactorily define the rights and duties of man in the negative terms of Locke? If not, then how shall we lay positive obligations upon individuals and classes without losing much liberty and falling back into a society of status?
>
> What Community is and how it is related to representative government. . . .[6]

The author comments on the "speculative" quality of these questions. The student will not emerge from this course with a set of answers. He will, however, have some ideas on some important subjects and presumably some habits of reflection to help him continue the consideration of these subjects. It is impossible to apply the language of the previous paper to this view of knowledge and operations. This knowledge consists in part, of course, of "abstractions," but the abstractions are not conceived as being "about" the same things. The objects are not uniform relations but variable acts.

The orientation of this course, like the first one, is "practical" in the sense that the student is to learn how to confront "certain modern social and political problems." These problems would be called "fundamental" by a sympathetic critic and perhaps "philosophical" by an antagonistic critic. It is hard to say from the course description how close it approaches to the specifics of contemporary social and political organization. The designers of the course may be among those who feel that it is precisely such data which will be well managed by the student with a grasp of larger questions.

The knower, too, is discussed in this article, not in terms of being released from distorting preconceptions, but in terms of his being helped to "find out what he really wants and does not want."

> There is, of course, hardly a more difficult question for a man to answer: not a little because what he believes he wants depends largely upon what he thinks he is, and the question of what this man is, or man as such is, has some not too simple ramifications. At any rate, great books and great events as well, can give guidance in this inquiry by helping the student elicit his own deeper feelings and convictions about what he wants and is.[7]

This is to say the student is to "make himself," taking leads from his interpretation of the ideas and events of the past. The author does not trouble to say it, but neither the ideas nor the events of the past speak univocally on this point. The student, rather than having himself draped in some college- or "specialist"-approved suit of "attitudes and beliefs," is to work these questions out for himself —with aid.

If we turn from course descriptions to the consideration of some "issues" in general education in the social sciences, do we find the four categories we have described of use?

The question of history as against the more systematic social sciences is often debated and sometimes in "either-or" terms. History is primarily (in the language used above) a matter of empirical knowledge, but, since any specific actors and institutions themselves made analyses and had political rationalizations, history also concerns these in an indirect way. This is especially clear if the history read is a thoroughgoing one or if history is approached through the documents produced by the actors. Looked at from this angle, history is indispensable to the social sciences, but it is only one element in it.

There are, of course, "histories" written by philosophers, or those who have got-

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[7] *Ibid.*

ten hold of a set of principles from the analytic sciences and play them hard. But under such circumstances, the advantages of history for the student—its attention to the facts—tend to disappear. Under this interpretation history is neither "past politics" nor past anthropology, sociology, economics, or philosophy.

Again in respect to "knowledge" there is an issue which is in a sense not one, since it is not articulated. What is the "knowledge" which the student has when he leaves a social science course? This knowledge is often spoken of as though it were the *conclusions* reached on a number of subjects by some selected authorities. We have seen a variant of this assumption in the Cabot-Kohl paper discussed above. It is a frequent assumption,[8] in spite of the fact that it may be seen to be absurd as soon as it is pointed out. In the first place, authorities differ. Second, a conclusion is not knowledge without its reasons and its counter-reasons.

This question takes another form in connection with "scientific method" in the social sciences. No course description denies that students learn scientific method. But the great majority of such descriptions do not reveal how this occurs. Students may be given *descriptions* of scientific method. Methods, however, are ways of acting, and ways of acting are learned only by doing. What are the students *doing* in the generality of social science courses? It is probably accurate to say that they are either reading or listening to the end of mastering some approved conclusions. But education in scientific method in the social sciences surely involves confronting the student with at least some of the problems which the social scientist himself confronts—such problems as: What are the appropriate principles in a given investigation? What is the road to these principles and the correct application and verification of them? The variety of cases and kinds of principles necessary to such education may well become an issue once there is a wider effort to do this sort of thing.

The attempt to apply the principle of "group dynamics" to the problems of social science instruction is an example of the use of one of the four aspects, namely, the student, while submerging the other three. It is the student as he is in a group which is the primary fact. It is from the group that the processes and problems emerge. The processes, or "operations," by which problems are considered are natural to the group and grow out of the group situation. The objects which the group will consider and the knowledge which will result also depend on this variable. Thus neither objects, knowledge, nor operations have a status independent of the knower in a group. Of course, if the group is taken to be humanity or a culture, this may be argued cogently, as John Dewey has done. But for any one group of students this is distorting the picture.

An attempt has been made in this paper, first, to describe a perspective from which the problems of social science education may be viewed and, second, to show that the perspective really works. This perspective "works," it is hoped, not in the sense that it solves problems but in the sense that it is an aid in identifying where the problems are or, in some instances, where they ought to be.

[8] See, e.g., *Social Sciences in General Education*, pp. 80–82, 204–7.

A TEACHING FELLOW VIEWS THE HARVARD PROGRAM

Norman Birnbaum

THE teaching fellow, conducting discussion sections in a large introductory lecture course in social science, is in a position to view both the deficiencies of his students and the foibles of his superiors with a compound of jaundice and compassion. His position (the teaching fellow at Harvard is, at once, a member of the staff and a student, journeyman, and novice) places him in a somewhat indeterminate status. This very indeterminacy, perhaps, qualifies him to meet the requirements established by Karl Mannheim for the "detached intellectual," bound to no narrowly defined set of viewpoints but able to take a stand outside the usual range of perceptions and opinions. At any rate, this paper is the product of three years of experience in one of Harvard's largest elementary general education courses in social science.[1] Some reflections on this experience may well have meaning for those in other institutions: I have attempted to keep these remarks from dealing with local issues only and rather to sketch the larger context in which all of us must work.

A discussion of the problem of introductory work in social science in a general education program must begin with some discussion of the aims of such a program as a whole. Work in a program of general education benefits not alone students but those faculty members engaged in it.[2] And the ultimate effect may be to recall the university as a whole to some of its most important functions at a time when these are in grave danger of being forgotten or overlooked.

Our universities and colleges have recently taken on some curious aspects, reflecting certain broad developments and pressures in society as a whole. These social facts will not be altered by lamentation or pious hand-wringing. Acknowledgment of them, however, is an initial step toward such mastery of the situation as we can attain. Our undergraduate schools and, to a significant degree, graduate schools in the liberal arts have become vocational in effect, if not in intent. These schools are now trade schools, preparing personnel for critical positions in the bureaucratic and technical elites needed to run modern society. In so far as this is so, some of the other aims of education are likely to be ignored or, more accurately, understressed.

The university as a whole, meanwhile, has become increasingly involved with the big power structures of our society, whether private or public. It has almost been converted into a service station which fuels and wipes the engines of power. But functioning as a service sta-

[1] This course is Professor Samuel Beer's Social Sciences 2. For an account of the Harvard program in social science see David Owen, "Harvard General Education in Social Science," *Journal of General Education*, V (October, 1950), 17. It would be ungracious to make public these sometimes critical observations without recording the real education and inspiration I have received from working with Messrs. Beer and Owen.

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This paper was originally delivered as a talk to the Harvard Committee on General Education's "Shop Club"—the members of the committee and the lecturers in the introductory courses.

[2] David Riesman has made this point quite effectively with reference to social science. See his "Some Problems of a Course in 'Culture and Personality,'" *Journal of General Education*, V (January, 1951), 122.

tion carries with it a danger: the service station may become an ideological assembly plant, grinding out prefabricated answers to unembarrassing questions. When the intellectual accepts a purely technical definition of his role, the critical abilities and powers he is supposed to cherish must diminish, if not vanish. One member of the Harvard faculty recently said: "If social science is to be taken seriously and receive large financial support, its 'engineering' applications must visibly pay off." This statement is not, I submit, uttered with a sense of the tradition of social science as an independent intellectual activity behind it. Its instrumental, indeed manipulative, undertones, cannot be overlooked. Perhaps there is some connection between this attitude and the overconcern with technique, the trivialization of subject matter in too much of the work of the "new" social sciences (anthropology, psychology, sociology). General education, especially in the social sciences, can counteract such tendencies. Courses that seek to acquaint students with fundamental issues must force teachers to consider their assumptions anew. And the historical dimensions of social science courses in a program of general education may bring those in the "new" social sciences to confront, as their founders did, problems of major historical transformation, rather than problems whose very definition takes for immutable and central one institutional system.

The university is, of course, inextricably bound to the larger society. I do not wish to argue for the impossible: a severance of these connections. But sometimes social institutions are most creative when in a state of tension. Perhaps we must make an effort to redress the balance between vocational training and the service functions just discussed and certain more traditional aims of education.

A defense of tradition does not entail a retreat from contemporary reality; nor does it imply a reactionary position with respect to larger social problems. Rather, the problem of conserving tradition is a critical issue of the rise of mass society. Mass society (a hybrid offspring of industrialism and the bourgeois order's attack on old Europe) poses a tremendous threat to inner experience and cultural tradition alike.[3] These are closely related, since tradition without personal meaning and seizure is empty, inner experience without cultural form is chaotic. This threat, perhaps inherent in the egalitarianism expressing itself in popular culture, is the consequence of the awful compulsive force and stereotyping power of the new society's technological organization. Here, at the root of the issue, the general education program can play an important role in summoning the university to defend a tradition which ennobles it and gives it connection with an ancient and honorable past.

For the value of general education courses, in social science no less than in the natural sciences or the humanities, is that they can make the inculcation of attitudes toward tradition a central concern. In the social sciences the tradition with which we deal is one of detached (but not necessarily dispassionate) inquiry into the nature of man and society. At Harvard we teach this operating tradition, as it were, along with a substantive one: some account of the actual development of Western institutions and social thought. This duality of aim results in some tensions and contradictions we have yet to resolve. Perhaps we try to do too much. But it is important to see that we are doing something that differs from what other introductory courses attempt, in emphasis if not in principle.

What we are doing, in a very real sense, is adding chapters to our students' autobiographies—chapters they never knew existed. We are showing them that they have a tradition, we are making them aware of their birthright. And if

[3] See, e.g., the valuable discussion by Arnold Hauser in the second volume of his *Social History of Art* (New York, 1951).

we do so most successfully (the amount of student co-operation demanded in this process is actually considerable), we are altering their actual nervous endowment. In this respect the social science courses have a peculiarly crucial role to play: one often hears complaints of the loss of a sense of tragedy and destiny in modern life. For children of a secularized culture, history is perhaps the one equivalent of the destiny that older cultures envisaged as binding. By teaching our students history, we expose them to their tradition, to their destiny, and to the limits of their situation. This is a moral dimension in social science education, not merely a technical one, and one which we cannot afford to overlook.

The inculcation of these attitudes in our students is a task made difficult and complicated by the condition in which we receive them. They come to us as victims: victims of the abominable secondary-school education they have almost invariably received. Just why secondary-school education and intellectual training at home should be so poor is a complex question. Surely, the general antipathy to intellectual activity and to inner cultivation so characteristic of American society must act as a contextual factor of great weight. But the fact is that our students upon arrival at college are most assuredly unable to think, do hardly better as far as reading and writing are concerned, and are utter strangers to the traditions into which we plunge them with, for them, brute and terrifying force. I am not at all sure, after listening to many students describe their first encounters with general education materials as veritable traumata, that the brutality of the experience is not a good thing: this work does represent a great break with secondary school, and perhaps the very pains of the experience convey this fact as nothing else could.

What is most striking is the varied way in which secondary-school background conditions the incapacity of the student to deal with the course materials. The large urban high schools produce, as a rule, boys from working-class or lower-middle-class homes, anxious and eager to make good. These are instrumentalists of the most unashamed sort: their attitudes are focused on grades and not on intellectual attainment. The suburban high schools—training grounds for what Oscar Handlin has called the "ruthless hedonism" of college life—perhaps cultivate more graces. Their alumni have less learning to do about the American success system when they get to college and are therefore less amenable to education.

It is impossible to characterize the preparatory schools uniformly. A good many seem to be detention camps, exit from which can be obtained only by passing the College Board examinations. The so-called "better" schools—the province of that self-constituted aristocracy which originated in eastern seaboard fortunes—generally function to insulate their young men from the rest of American society. A middle group of large schools, typified by Andover, Exeter, and Lawrenceville, seems best: here, too, a certain orthodoxy, even woodenness, in their curricular arrangements dulls the sharp edge of their training. The so-called "progressive" schools, for all their imaginativeness, also cannot escape censure: the amount of intellectual discipline they impart seems minimal.

It is on this canvas that our brushes must work. Two problems may be singled out as central in teaching social science on the elementary level: the problem of analysis and the problem of meaning. The analytical abilities of our students are underdeveloped, indeed rudimentary, when they reach us. The status of a concept, the notion of a definition, the relation between a theory and a fact, the question of the types of evidence that would support or refute a conclusion—these are quite alien matters to them, even quite terrifying matters. In this connection it would be interesting to investigate the transfer value of what students learn in the natural science

courses. Do they consciously or unconsciously utilize any methodological sophistication they may derive from acquaintance with physical science procedures? I think we might profit by doing some spadework on the problem of concept formation, right at the beginning of our courses. This might well induce a certain self-consciousness in the students. I do not mean that we should bother them with the tiresome and endless rituals of methodological discussion so crippling in its effects on real production in the "new" social sciences; but here, too, a balance may be struck.[4]

The problem of meaning is perhaps harder to handle. If our students do choose to remain isolated from history (and at some level, conscious or unconscious, a choice is made), we can accuse them of moral deficiency. But they are playing the role of common men everywhere: immunization from preoccupation with larger social problems seems to be conceived as a way to guarantee health in the personal sphere. These students are not politically conservative. Conservativism implies a position. They are, rather, depoliticized. And their depoliticization, which they share with too many of their teachers, is a function of their psychological isolation from history. We are, then, obliged in some way to convey to them the historicity of their own lives, the limiting dimensions of the cultural situation into which they have been born. This is so much a matter of attitude and not of procedure that I am at a loss to specify concrete measures. But perhaps some remarks later on will suggest an indirect approach to this problem.

It is perhaps inevitable that, as a sociologist, I question whether enough analysis gets into our courses. Let me make my position clear. I am in favor of the limitation of elementary courses to Western thought and institutions, historically treated, as suggested by the Harvard Committee on General Education. If a student is to be exposed to one and only one social science course (and one is all that our program requires of him), then it is more important that he know something of the French Revolution than about the Zuni. But I do not believe that our courses do enough with the social science concepts and methods that could really illuminate our Western historical development. Standard historiography, of course, suffers from the same defect, but this is hardly a justification for carrying it into our program.

To mention one specific area which has been substantially neglected: the entire modern development in psychology centering on Freud finds little place in the introductory program. Freud is a seminal figure of great historic weight and magnitude. I can sympathize with objections to cluttering our courses with the work of those rat-and-maze psychologists whose severest criticism of a colleague is that his findings tend to anthropomorphize behavior. (Not all of them are like this, however: one need only cite the name of Edward C. Tolman.) But surely Freud belongs in our program. If we do not use him to study the psychology of regicide in the English, French, and Russian revolutions, we can at least treat him as a great figure in modern social thought.

Another substantive point disturbs me. I have mentioned depoliticization. Our

[4] After drafting this paper I read and found myself in considerable agreement with Robert Redfield, "Social Science Research in General Education," Journal of General Education, VI (January, 1952), 81. Professor Redfield's article is apparently a rejoinder to Elbridge Sibley, "Education in Social Science and the Selection of Students for Training as Professional Social Scientists," *Items* [of the Social Science Research Council], V, No. 3 (September, 1951), 26. Although correct in insisting on a wider definition of social science for general education purposes than that encompassed by the quantitative researches of the "new" disciplines Professor Redfield overlooks the fact that the logic of scientific procedure must remain the same even for the broadest questions. In this sense, Dr. Sibley's hopes for more rigorous training in the assessment of evidence in elementary social science courses should be shared by those who, like Professor Redfield, are more interested in broad cultural transformations than in the minutiae of contemporary society.

courses do not deal sufficiently with those great conflicts of power which are the sources of tension in our social structure. If the engineering approach to social science is followed, they never will: the engineers will always work for those who pay them most, and these will hardly wish to see the sources of their power depicted and analyzed.[5]

Perhaps I can concretize this problem. Vast sums of government and foundation money are now employed in research on the Soviet Union. One can speculate about the fact that no university has established an "American research center," to focus on strains and stresses in our society, with particular reference to class alignment and political control. Yet quite a few universities have centers to study these problems in a Soviet setting. I do not mean to deprecate the vast self-critical enterprises in which our democracy is continually engaging and in which the universities have played an honorable part. But tendencies to look the other way are natural. Now the great issues of power that confront our society can be conceived of neither in the simplified, if dramatic, terms of the Marxist eschatology nor in the more benign framework of Professor Galbraith's recent speculations.[6] But some effort to acquaint our students with these issues of power is a responsibility of ours, and I should feel a good deal more confident of the ultimate success of our educational endeavors, were we to turn some of our attention to these matters in introductory courses.

Problems of teaching procedure also concern us. No discussion of general education and its problems can overlook the problem of lecture and discussion sections. Harvard, of course, is committed to the lecture system for organizational reasons. But some account of its limitations ought to be given. The psychological climate of the large lecture is one of anonymity and depersonalization: the student actually reports that he feels alone and lost in the large lecture hall. Discussion sections can and frequently do counter this. In particular, the psychological discomforts attendant upon a student's approach to radically new materials demands the more intimate atmosphere of section or tutorial work: our functions are quite frequently therapeutic.

Perhaps it is the bias of a teaching fellow that leads me to this, but I feel that the most critical work done in general education courses at Harvard is done in the sections. I do not wish to underestimate the effects of good lecturing, but the differences in psychological climate seem to make the section more useful, almost irrespective of personnel. Painstaking and patient work with students hesitant to touch new materials can be done only in sections, and the smaller the group, the better.

A word on the dilemma of the teaching fellow is also in order. Most universities tend to reward not teaching competence but scholarly production. The very junior staff member sensitive to university atmosphere must recognize that the most valued professional awards are for production. An inevitable tendency to slight his teaching must follow. While it is true that general education teaching is a fruitful intellectual experience, its effects on the quality of production must be long-term, while it usually functions immediately to limit the quantity of scholarly work. These courses, at all levels, demand considerable preparation: the amount of time one can find for one's own work must constrict. Harvard, like other institutions, is beginning to take account of this situation in appointment

[5] From this point of view it is legitimate to criticize a prevalent tendency to place too much emphasis on "human-relations" courses. The human-relations approach tends to reduce the world to face-to-face relationships and retreats from broader problems to a comfortable analysis of some of the irritations of daily life. Useful in its place, this can function to divert attention from deeper matters.

[6] J. K. Galbraith, *American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952).

policy. But care must be taken lest the quality of recruits for general education teaching suffer.

This leads me back to some of the themes with which I began. I said that the general education program had the broadest possible potential for gain. Indeed, it is the best hope for education at Harvard and, I suspect, at other institutions as well. The necessity to teach, all too often treated as a chore, may in this case revitalize a good deal of the actual advanced work of the university. For general education programs impose special demands on those working in them. The interdisciplinary nature of the courses, the fact that these are pruned to fundamentals, the search for these fundamentals—all this may bring scholars to the brink of the abyss by making thinkers of them. It may also restore something of the balance of the university as a whole. The service and vocational functions of education at our universities seem to have gotten out of hand. General education aims at no particular vocational benefit, nor is it quite clear that an enlightened citizenry, if that is what we aim to produce in our social science courses, will be of great comfort to those in power or to the more fundamentalist elements in American society.

Our students come to us thinking of intellectual activity as meaningless and addicted to conceiving of social problems in the magical and concretistic ways of popular sociology. If we aim to expose them to a tradition organized about intellectual experience and the inner dimensions of spirit treated of by novelists and poets, if we aim to educate them in the ability to analyze social situations with that detachment which comes from a sense of their historicity, then we may very well not be educating for citizenship at all. Rather, we may be producing a group of underground men, whose task it is to resist mass culture and the theodicy of industrial society in those minor and circumspect ways in which, and only in which, spiritual heroism is possible in this age of tin.

THE PLACE OF REASON IN HISTORICAL CHANGE

R. F. Arragon

MICHAEL POLANYI has recently written that, to him, "there is no justification for demanding freedom of thought unless you believe that thought has a power of its own."[1] Those who have theories on the dynamics and patterns of historical change, that is, philosophies of history, will be likely to value freedom for systematic truth-seeking inquiry in proportion to the importance they give this reasoning and the knowledge it secures as a factor in molding society and culture. Two themes are to be treated, the role of reason and the theory of the cycle, both of which appear in Greek thought in political and ethical terms and in modern thought in broader context and joined to ideas of continuity and process not present in ancient theory.

Man's control of his collective affairs through taking thought was not first dreamed of by modern planners. It was the theme of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* and, with a more modest objective, of Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*. Justice, the end of the state, or the *polis*, was for them an object of inquiry, something to be known. Recognition of it, whether as a Platonic idea or as the Aristotelian community of interest among citizens, and discovery of the means of realizing it were not intuitive. Natural inclination and habit were important but were not enough. Reason was essential to the philosopher-king and to the statesman, and educational curriculums had key places in both the *Republic* and the *Politics*. The attention of the legislator was directed to the social and moral effects of political institutions and of legislation. Reason was, moreover, not simply a means of social control. It was an end of the state, in that rational knowledge of virtue and justice was the requisite of the good life as well as of responsible participation in directing social action.

The governance of society by reason did not, however, mean for Plato and Aristotle the recognition of it as a means of continuous and therefore progressive historical change. They were concerned rather with preventing change, once the just government or one that was directed to the common interest had been established. The just distribution of benefits would, in Aristotle's view, by the balance of interests tend to assure stability and to lessen the danger of revolution. Change was a function of lack of balance. The extremes, no longer mediated, got out of hand. Such change was natural but bad. It was the result of the self-seeking and power-corrupted aspect of man's nature, the natural depravity that overshadowed reason in the world of appearances and condemned the philosopher who returned from the light of the sun to destruction at the hands of the shadow-watchers in the cave. Not even an ideal constitution for the *polis* seemed immune from corruption. Plato made clear the alternatives—the shaping of the state through inquiry into and knowledge of justice and the degeneration of the state because of men's blind egoism—and pointed to the outcome. Since philosophers could not be kings, the history of the *polis* was the pathology of regressive change.

Plato's ideal scheme of regression from

[1] Michael Polanyi, *The Logic of Liberty: Reflections and Rejoinders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 193.

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the rule of philosophers to timocracy and on through oligarchy and democracy to tyranny was, in its dynamic of moral decay, like the Hesiodic descent from the golden age through the bronze and heroic to the iron age. It was also like the Herodotean commonplace of the overthrow of the prosperous and the proud because of *hybris*, a pattern that anticipated the medieval wheel of fortune. The ancient political cycle followed this pattern. Its moral fatality lay not so much in a decline of governmental forms from monarchy to aristocracy and then to democracy (which is reminiscent of the Platonic scheme) as in the degeneration of each form into disorder as the result of success. Polybius thought that escape from this fatality might be possible in the case of Rome by the Aristotelian principle of balance through the mixture of forms; but, when he saw here, too, the signs of disintegration, he accepted the organic inevitability of decline, thus making the cycle a life-cycle as well as a moral one. Machiavelli, too, adopting the antique political and moral sequence, held equilibrium impossible.

The implications of the cyclic theory for freedom of thought were suggested in the efforts of ancient literary critics to explain the decline of literature under the Roman Principate. The problem as stated by Tacitus (in the dialogue *On Oratory*) and by Pseudo-Longinus (in the essay *On the Sublime*) was whether the loss of literary power and especially of spoken eloquence was due to the loss of political liberty. Did freedom "feed the imagination of the lofty-minded," while "servitude, though it be the most righteous," was "the cage of the soul"? Tacitus, even if he were to answer in the affirmative, seemed willing to accept the consequences of servitude, since security was to be preferred to freedom. "Great and famous oratory," said one of his speakers, "is a foster-child of license, which foolish men called liberty, an associate of sedition, a goad for the unbridled populace." Such was the interpretation of freedom of speech in republican Rome and in democratic Athens. The author of *On the Sublime* had a similar view of license, but he gave a moral interpretation to literary decline by using the cyclic sequence, wealth, extravagance, ostentation, vanity, and luxury and hence insolence and lawlessness—appetites, he said, that, if not restrained, would set the world on fire. To this moral decay he attributed the lack of sublimity in literature.

Two kinds of freedom of thought appear to be involved—that of public speech and democratic politics, which was considered destructive of society, and that of the lofty-minded poet or philosopher, who, as in the case of the Stoic sage, had subjective, personal freedom, the self-sufficiency of the man of rational moderation, unmoved by the pressure of men and circumstance and by passions. Socrates represented and was authority for both kinds of freedom. He was the self-sufficient philosopher when he drank the hemlock and the fosterer of sedition (even perhaps the sophist) when he refused to give up the role of the gadfly. The paradox was heightened by the Athenian democracy's condemnation in Socrates' trial of the public and social exercise of freedom of thought (essential to the democratic conduct of the assembly and law courts), with the result in the case of Plato that intellectual freedom was driven from the agora into the academy and became the self-sufficiency of individual, or private, reason. Plato's abandonment of politics was an anticipation of the shift of philosophical emphasis, by the end of the fourth century, to internal freedom of thought. The dignity and security of rational man lay in his reliance upon himself in an indifferent or hostile world or in his contemplation of the eternal and changeless in nature amid the Heracleitan flux of appearances. He could defy, disregard, or, with Marcus Aurelius, dutifully endure the state and history. This philosophical solution suggests the Sophoclean

tragic attitude toward man's predicament and the nature of his responsibility. Such self-sufficient reason was not viewed as a factor in historical change, and its freedom was subjective.

I shall not follow this private reason into its Christian form, the contemplative life, except to note that the latter, like its neo-Stoic predecessor, gained its sanction from the universal reason of nature and of God. This reason, writ large, was authority for human knowledge. Hence man's reason *could* be more than internal and defensive; it could be directed to the world about men. The design—that is, the laws—of universal reason could be understood. Why, then, should the design not be inquired into, and, what is more, since it shaped man's environment and his nature, why should not man by understanding these through his own reason use the laws of physical and human nature to shape his individual and social course, that is, to make history? The confidence of Descartes that rigorous method would give such knowledge as might enable man (given the chance) even to re-create the material world as God had created it and the confidence of Bacon that empirical inquiry would contribute to the betterment of man's lot indicated the grounds of the idea of material and social progress through reason, the philosophy of history of the Enlightenment.[2] An essential component or corollary of the idea of progress was that, in the variety and conflict of opinion, truth could be rationally discerned and would triumph in the interchange of argument and of evidence. Not only could freedom of thought be trusted. It was *required* to assure enlightenment and progress, for these were dependent upon the inquiring, testing, nonauthoritarian quality of reason. The doctrine of Milton's *Areopagitica* belonged with the progressive philosophy of history, which was thereby the historical theory of liberalism.

This theory took its stand not only upon the moral dignity and responsibility of the individual (antique and Christian in origin) but also upon what was essentially linked therewith, the basic, potential rationality of every man which enabled him to cope with the problems of religion, economics, and politics as well as with the control of the physical world, that is, to be free in the shaping of his course of life in adjustment with that of others. Reason was natural to men. In the possession of it as a quality, despite differences of degree, men were uniform in nature and hence had natural equality as members of the species. Reason was the means to utility. Through its calculation, conduct could be regulated and the future in some measure foreseen and directed. It organized societies, through social contracts, discovered natural law and natural rights, and shaped institutions and legislation for the greatest good of the greatest number. Rationality was at the heart of the idea of progress. What reason needed was freedom from unnatural impediments—from religious and metaphysical dogma, from superstitious old wives' tales, from the false comforts of the mind and the fears of innovation that make men willing to accept things as they are. Indeed, unrestricted by *external* authority, reason would liberate itself and all men from the *internal* impediments. Rational progress was thus linked with liberal individualism in a philosophy of history that evaluated past and present by the measure of enlightenment and looked to the future of cumulative scientific knowledge and of the expansion of rationality among all men. The hope was bright from Bacon to Condorcet[3] to Comte and to Marx.

But would any special action be necessary to free reason and man? Born free,

[2] Cf. Descartes, *Discourse on Method;* and Bacon, *Novum organum* and *The Advancement of Learning.*

[3] See Marie J. A. N. Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progès de l'esprit humain.*

he was everywhere in chains to legal hindrances and discriminations, to conventions and superstitions, to passions, even perhaps in spite of a naturally moral and social disposition. Confident reason, exploring and establishing the design, or law, of nature as it actually was, tended to become impatient and dogmatic. A clean break was evidently needed, perhaps a revolutionary break, to insure a new age. The fresh start and freedom from the past that Descartes and Bacon had sought for the philosophy, or science, of nature was advocated by some later thinkers not only for social philosophy but for the social order itself. Society needed positive guidance—legislation, education, even violence. Men might have to be forced to be free or at least to recognize the authority of science and of the elite that possessed it. With intelligence passing from the theological and metaphysical stages to the scientific, the causal laws of physical and human nature were, or could be, known and could and should be put to work for men's advantage. Thus Comte, impatient at the slowness of Frenchmen and others to recognize what "positive" science could do, urged the institution of a cult of humanity to provide emotional support for a rational system.[4]

Dogmatism was encouraged, moreover, by the application of the idea of causal determinism to history. The necessity that linked events, whether on the analogy of mechanical and statistical laws, as for Cournot, or of chemical or biological mechanism, as for Taine, seemed to endow causal patterns with a scientific certainty that made the sequence of events explicable and predictable.[5] The dogmatic accent given to reason is particularly noticeable if the method of thinking about history is made the principle of the actual pattern of the historical events that are being thought about, as in the case of the Marxian dialectic, which was and is both scientific method and inevitable process.

British empiricism and laissez faire, however, resisted the Continental tendency to scientific authoritarianism. Buckle[6] as a philosopher of history was not less assured than Comte, Cournot (with qualifications), and Marx in affirming the causal regularity of human behavior (at least in statistical terms) and in seeking the laws, and he, too, saw in men's reasoning and scientific knowledge the means of progress. But progress for him was the freeing of men from authority. Power, whether of climate and other natural phenomena or of the church and the state, was in his view oppressive, and escape lay in reason. The course of human progress was from domination by the physical environment and that by institutions of authority to rational freedom. Marx himself envisaged, after dictatorship had cleared obstacles, the withering-away of the state.

Even more dubious for the recognition of the historical role of free rational inquiry than the authoritarianism of scientific reason was the doctrine of the *immanence* of reason. This reason, rooted in human cultural tradition, was a psychic and organic principle, manifested in social change or development. It was a historical force, whose meaning emerged in what came to be considered the process of social evolution. Adumbrated by Burke and Montesquieu, this idea was

[4] Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive* and *Système de politique positive, ou traité de sociologie, instituant le religion de l'humanité*. The latter is represented in English in H. Martineau's translated condensation as *The Positive Philosophy* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1853) and in *The Positivist Library of Auguste Comte*, trans. and ed. Frederic Harrison (London: Reeves & Turner, 1886).

[5] A. Cournot, *Essai sur les fondements de nos connaissances et sur les caractères de la critique philosophique* (Paris: L. Hachette & Cie, 1851), and *Traité de l'enchainement des idées fondamentales dans les sciences et dans l'histoire* (Paris: L. Hachette & Cie, 1861). See also Introduction to H. A. Taine, *History of English Literature* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1900).

[6] Henry T. Buckle, *History of Civilization in England* (London: John W. Parker & Son, 1857–61).

central to Herder's philosophy of history.[7] The notion that history is the education of the human race and that this education is manifested in reason was not original with Herder. It had been Lessing's interpretation of Jewish-Christian history. Lessing treated reason as the culmination of the divine training of man through revelation in a three-stage pattern that anticipated Comte's less theological scheme.[8] Before Lessing, Vico's "new science"[9] (a historical, in contrast with Cartesian, or mathematical, science) had made the activity of eternal and infinite mind all-pervasive in history. Man could know as true, rather than as merely certain or on authority, only that which he made. Hence he could know, first hand, mathematics and history; but, whereas the former was abstract and its application in the natural and other sciences second hand, the latter could be known directly through human experience. Mind could understand its own activity, could evaluate its own results. History was the course of mind in time, and, if this mind was not precisely divine reason (Vico did not admit such divine immanence), at least it was human reason in a universal sense, common to the nations and manifesting divine providence.

Herder, like Vico, suggested a more immanent activity of reason than did Lessing. History is a whole, a chain of sociability and of civilizing tradition, the result of the collaboration of individuals —individual men, great and small, peoples or nations, arts and sciences, each in its place and time contributing uniquely to the tradition. Tradition was described as the "Voice of God" and also as reason (*Vernunft*), the sum of the observations and practices of our souls. Together with goodness and love, it fights against the wild forces to create order and in due time triumphs over them. Though whatever *can* happen anywhere, *does* happen, reason and justice alone endure. Herder's progressive optimism rested not only upon reason as scientific understanding but upon reason implicit in the growth of human culture as a social bond linking men across time and space. This progress was open-ended, not following an a priori design, for reason was both the means and the end, the tool and the product, in which the infinite all-fulfilling revealed itself.

Hegel's philosophy of history[10] was like Herder's in important respects. Hegel was more systematic and coherent, less poetically fertile in suggestion than Herder, more abstract and inclusive in pattern, less concrete and detailed in application. Moreover, his very metaphysics was historical, in the sense that its central feature was change, or becoming, and that the dynamic principle of change was rational. Every historical event therefore, though unique in its actuality, was a manifestation of a universal, rational spirit, but it was not predetermined according to an a priori pattern for Hegel any more than for Herder. The driving force in historical change was the curiosity of the spirit, that is, of universal reason, to know itself through its manifestations. Men as such individual manifestations would seek to know themselves and hence, in a limited way, the spirit. Through self-knowledge would come self-release, or freedom, a subjective sort of freedom, it would seem, except that self-knowledge would be for Hegel the objectification of the self. Self-determination would take place in the

[7] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (New York: P. F. Collins & Son, 1909); Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1900); J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Berlin: G. Hempel, 1879).

[8] G. E. Lessing, *Education of the Human Race* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1858).

[9] Giambattista Vico, *La scienza nuova prima* (Bari: Laterza, 1931), and the translation of the third edition by T. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch, *The New Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948).

[10] Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (London: H. G. Bohn, 1857).

growth of self-consciousness. For individuals this consciousness and its attendant freedom would be through recognition of their participation in universal reason, and they would be more or less free according to the measure of such self-discovery. Hegel gave the theory a political emphasis by making social organization, or community—that is, men's common consciousness with their fellows—the means of participation in the universal spirit. Law and morality were necessary for freedom.

The rational moved in society as it did in abstract thought according to a dialectical structure from thesis to antithesis and synthesis. As later with Marx, the historical sequence was like a special kind of sequence in reasoning. It may be easy for historians to point out the inadequacy of the dialectic as an explanation of history, but they cannot readily dissipate the pervasive influence of the doctrine that thought and historical process are akin, indeed are the same. Reason thus gained an omnipotent, but ambiguous, place in historical change. If rational thought was immanent in the process, what was left for the reason of men? And what was the need for their unhindered pursuit, exchange, and testing of ideas? Even though the process was considered to be open-ended, freedom for the individual might seem to be self-abandonment to participation in the process rather than freedom of inquiry. Moreover, the process of self-discovery of the spirit had, if not fixed ends, a pattern, and, though protean in application, this rational design of history was authoritarian in tendency. The resulting ambiguities may be illustrated from two philosophies of history strongly influenced by Hegelianism—namely, Marxian dialectical materialism and the theory of life-cycles.

In Marxianism, as in Cournot's causal linkage and in any scientifically oriented deterministic view of historical causality, the role assigned to reason is clear in so far as reason is claimed to be the observer and systematic interpreter of inevitable processes, physical or psychological. The doubt is whether reason can as an agent freely and significantly, as Cournot thought, control the historical movement through knowledge of the causal system. The rational and progressive nature of Marxian historical theory has been strongly maintained in recent years, especially in the face of naziism, by such Marxist writers respected in the West as Lukács, the Hungarian literary critic, and Needham, the British biologist.[11] Man and society are still considered perfectible, and confidence in science and technology seems not to have been lost in the Soviet Union. The questions raised by this position are both practical and theoretical. Is the rational inquiry free, that is, self-determining, and allowed to make its way amid the challenge and support of other free inquiries on its own merits as judged by this court of reason, or is it recognized to be rational only if it conforms to the pattern, or perhaps rather to certain patterns, of dialectical reason assumed to pervade the movement of the physical world and of mankind? Moreover, since the movement of thought would likewise be determined by the dialectic, departures from orthodoxy and bourgeois ideologies might be considered to be necessary steps (antitheses) in the cancellation and inclusion (*Aufhebung*) of themselves and their opposites in the inevitable syntheses. If so, need they be checked by political interference, or is this, too, an action of the dialectic and so a means to the truth or the self-discovery of the reason? I do not

[11] György Lukács, *Schicksalswende: Beiträge zu einer neuen deutschen Ideologie* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1948); Joseph Needham, *Time, the Refreshing River* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943); Karl Marx, *Capital* (Max Eastman's selections from the translation of Julian Borchardt's abridgment, in "Modern Library" ed. [1932]); Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International Library Publishing Co., 1904); Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1934).

think that this is a parody of the confusion that may result from the identification of reason and change. What becomes of human reason as a significant and "free" factor in social and cultural change if change is both inevitable and inevitably rational? Better that it fight the wild forces, expecting success in the long run with the aid of Herder's God, or that it face with tragic consciousness of inadequacy even overwhelming odds of unreason, than that it reconcile itself with the irrational or simply the nonrational by calling these rational.

The confusion is at least equally great if the words "reason" and "mind" are made synonymous with "humanity" or the "human spirit," *Welt-Geist, Zeit-Geist,* or *Volk-Geist,* in such a way as to include the irrational with the rational, the unconscious with the conscious. In this case, as in that of the dialectic, reason, by becoming the process itself, the very inner dynamic of historical change, is swallowed up in the process. It would be meaningless to speak of reason as *effecting* historical change. It *is* the change. In fact, the dynamic principle need not be reason at all; and after Hegel it tended to become, with some, the will, the blood, technology, or *Existenz.* In any case what need has process for freedom of thought? If immanent reason (or unreason) is (metaphysically) free to manifest itself in historical forms (according to the necessities of its nature), the freedom of men to inquire and to discuss is irrelevant except as inquiry and discussion happen to be at certain times the technique of the spirit for effecting changes in its manifestations.

The modern revival of the cyclic theory bears on this exception. Hegel, and Herder as well, despite their rational progressivism, contributed to the cyclic view of history. The notion that a people or the human race is unified by some immanent reason or spirit that shapes culture and history readily suggested that separate peoples or the whole of humanity are anthropomorphic organisms. Herder described speech as the "physiognomy" of a people or nation and attributed to every art and science growth, flowering, and decay; but he applied the life-cycle from childhood to high age not to individual nations but to the race as a whole. For Hegel the manifestation of the rational spirit in a particular nation was definitely an organic cycle. The fulfilment of its purpose exhausted that nation's reason for being. Its zest for life, its intelligence, were gone, and its continuance as routine was equivalent to death. This was a psychological and biological interpretation of the dialectic. The nation's loss of interest in life was because of the removal of contradiction by its success in realizing fully what Hegel called "its subjective being," that is, all the meaning of which it was capable as an expression of the spirit. Such realization was self-discovery of the spirit in this particular national form, and hence its self-destruction—the *Aufhebung* in the synthesis as preparation for a new purpose and higher conception in another national life.

The ambiguous relation of immanent and human reason and of authority and freedom again emerged here. The spirit, in making itself the object of its own thought, destroyed this determinate form of its objectivity. Hegel likened the process of the ripening of the life of the people to a certain fruition, which is the distillation of a poison draught that the people cannot let alone. Or, more specifically, the Greeks, through the influence of universal reason, reflected upon their own beliefs, customs, and obligations, recognized the limitations of these, demanded grounds for obeying them, and, indeed, questioned authority in general. Such was the work of the Sophists and the meaning of Socratic inquiry to the end of knowing one's self. Human reason, in seeking to understand itself and society, undermined both. Though this self-immolation was in the service of progress, or the movement toward a higher self-revelation, it made men's reason

appear as an enemy of the sense of community and of social order—in fact, of the continuance of the national life. Freely inquiring individual intelligence seems to have been, if not a cause, at least a symptom, of decay.

We are reminded of Herder's disparagement of scholarship and books as stifling to the understanding but fortunately destroyed by many sorts of revolutions, which providentially brought fresh air to men's souls. Learning and cultivation were built on the originality of the Natural Man, who was narrower but sounder and *tüchtiger* than his successors. So, too, was the wisdom of the British Constitution sounder for Burke than that of the French doctrinaires. Reason immanent in nature or in an evolving human society and in its cultural tradition had, it seemed, a social and moral authority to which critical reason, the solvent of authorities, could not aspire. The freedom which the latter claims may well be suspect to the adherents of the former, especially if the aim of the claimants is a revolutionary break with the past or if the freedom appears to be the license associated with the self-seeking individualism of the disintegrating phase of the ancient political cycle. In this respect the Hegelian cycle fits into and can be made to reinforce the moral dynamic of the cyclic tradition from Athens to the Italian Renaissance and after. This tradition had, indeed, a century before Hegel, been joined by Vico to the idea of history as the unfolding of reason. The cycle was interpreted by him as a rhythm of the mind from barbaric force and superstition to humanity and rationality, only to collapse in luxurious individualism. The outcome of Vico's cycle seems to have been as conclusive as was Hegel's. Its dynamic, however, was human degeneration rather than the dialectical self-immolation of reason, and hence the progress of humanity from cycle to cycle was not assured by Vico's theory as it was by Hegel's.

Of the three cyclical theories recently most popular in America, Spengler's is the most anti-intellectual in tendency. To him, critical, inquiring reason—the "nihilism" of Socrates and Rousseau—was a mark of the maturity of a culture that had already become civilization and was ripe for decay. The place of critical thinking in Toynbee's scheme is more complex. It is surely needed for working out responses to the successive challenges that a culture must face and is connected with the transformation of these challenges and responses into higher, or more ethereal, forms. Yet the schism of the soul that characterizes the death throes of civilization is like the breakup of social cohesion, which in the cyclic tradition is associated with the freedom of thought that is called "license." Toynbee's remedy would seem to be in religion. Sorokin's whole system is based on the movement of thought and feeling, from the "ideational" culture through the "idealistic" to the "sensate" culture and back to the ideational; but the reason of scientific investigation, the skeptical reason of the Enlightenment, is for him a sign of the onset of sensate culture (materialistic and disintegrating) rather than of the sound metaphysical rationality of the ideational.[12]

The uncertainty of the place of reason and of freedom of thought in these cyclic schemes is due partly to the differences in the use of the word "reason." Is it reasoning, that is, putting two and two together critically for the discovery of the unknown, even unsuspected, relations between things, events, or ideas, or is it an order of ideas, a law of nature, that is established or accepted as rational? The authority of the latter is challenged and tested by the criticism of the former. And why should it not be? Unless it de-

[12] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles F. Atkinson (2 vols.; New York: A. A. Knopf, 1926–28); Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (6 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1934–39), abridgment by D. C. Somervell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947); Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (4 vols.; New York: American Book Co., 1937–41).

pended upon revelation or upon emotional conviction, was it not established as rational by critical reason in the first place? Another cause of uncertainty is the fact that cycles without progress from one to another offer no hope of cumulative achievement by taking thought freely. Even Toynbee's seem doomed to ultimate fatality.

The theory of reason immanent in the historical process (whether this is cyclic or linear) is deceptive in its effect upon the place assigned to thought and to freedom of thought in historical change. It might appear that it would encourage rational exploration and innovation as the means of progress through increasing self-knowledge. And so it does in the philosophies of history of Croce and, especially, of Whitehead. In these contemporary progressive, noncyclical theories, freedom is the condition and goal of the creative activity of free rational intelligence. Croce's emphasis, in keeping with the idealistic tradition, is upon the moral significance of rational liberty. Whitehead directs particular attention to the importance of speculative, or inquiring, reason as an agent of progress in the emergence and development of ideas.[13]

The doctrine of immanence may, however, gravely compromise confidence in the capacity of rational inquiry and of the freedom necessary for such inquiry to shape the history of man and society. The idea that there is a universal principle of change within the very process of historical development lessens the importance of man as the maker of his own destiny, whether the immanent principle is the organic inevitability of the cycle or the relentless dialectic movement of society toward Utopia. It matters little whether the principle is called "rational" or "nonrational." Even asseverations of the open-endedness of the process have not prevented authoritarian conclusions. An immanent principle of change, though it makes everything else relative to the historical process, seems itself absolute and suggests that its pattern of the process is in some way preordained. Critical reason, the dissolver of such principles, appears irrelevant, if not worse, and the freedom it demands is suspect. What can be more rational than that which history is in the process of bringing into being, and what is more free than that which is in accord with this process?

Such are presently persuasive conclusions drawn from the unqualified belief in the inevitability of progress, from organismic cyclical theories, and from the doctrine of the immanence of reason (or unreason) in history. If we need not hold one or more of these views, perhaps we can still maintain, in the face of contemporary social and intellectual crisis, a less coherent and more exacting philosophy of history, one that gives fallible but critical human reason two complementary and hence, we may hope, not wholly incompatible roles. On the one hand, it would, by public exercise with the requisite freedom and good will, have some power to change men and society for the better, to modify, perhaps even to direct, the "wild forces" of which Herder was aware. But, if it fail or in proportion as its success is limited (and limitation is to be expected), it would maintain men in the tragic and philosophic view of the dignity of man against circumstance, not the quietist independence through withdrawal but the self-confidence of having sought to do what reason could do.

[13] Benedetto Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty*, trans. Sylvia Spriggs (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1941); Alfred N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1933).

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Solomon Lipp

I

THE relationship between the study of foreign languages and literatures, on the one hand, and the movement known as general education, on the other, poses a series of problems that merit study, discussion, and concrete action. The general education movement has had the effect of making foreign language teachers, already on the defensive, stir more uneasily. In some quarters general education would seem to view itself as a rival to, rather than as a complement of, liberal education, of which the study of foreign languages and literatures is an unmistakable part. The alarm of teachers of foreign languages is understandable, because general education (as conceived by some), by virtue of its orientation, makes no provision for foreign language study.

The question of vested interests, however, is not the paramount motivation for this article. It is suggested rather by the fact that certain suppositions made by some of those in the leadership of general education which reflect adversely upon the value of foreign language study are perhaps not quite so valid as would appear at first glance.

If foreign language teachers and general educationists are to learn from each other, as this paper proposes, it will first be necessary for both groups to show a measure of flexibility of approach and a willingness and ability to understand what each group is trying to do. Such readjustment is even more imperative for the foreign language teacher if, in addition to what he is doing now, he is to try to adapt his courses in language and literature to the framework of general education. Mutual give and take, increased contact between the two groups, and inclusion of foreign language study in the general education program wherever possible are bound to have salutary effects upon both camps. General education will be enriched by offerings in foreign languages; foreign language teachers will have their intellectual horizons broadened as a result of new experience with wider and interrelated fields of study.

It would be useful, first, however, to attempt to discover just how well and in what form general education itself has jelled. For, if foreign language teachers are to prepare themselves for reorientation, they must know what it is that faces them. Is it a uniform pattern, or is it a multifaceted configuration?

General educationists themselves will be the first to admit that the movement they represent has not developed in the same way in all places, i.e., with respect to its organization, form, structure, or content. General education in Case A may be confined to a two-year junior or community college, existing independently and having no connections with any other college or university in the area. In Case B it may be located in a college

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which offers a two-year course and which is part of a larger university, thus having connecting links with other schools and colleges of that university. The lack of a uniform pattern is further illustrated by Case C, wherein general education will, instead, consist of a series of courses, one or two years in duration, offered within the confines of a four-year liberal arts college.

Case C lends itself to variations: e.g., in Case C-1, students may be required to take certain basic courses in humanities, social studies, and natural sciences. In Case C-2 the courses may be optional.

In any case the general education program always emphasizes what is commonly referred to as the "wholeness" of knowledge; it stresses large, meaningful, related units or "wholes" rather than so-called "fragmented" and "specialized" knowledge. A still further variation consists in the possibility that, instead of starting from content, some programs take their departure from the point of view of student interests, needs, and problems. In short, the faces of general education are many; there is no fixed pattern. Perhaps there can never be one, nor should there be.

Yet, although the programs differ, it may perhaps be said that the following common elements can be extracted:

From the viewpoint of the student.—The attempt to create the optimum conditions for the student's growth; to make it possible for him to be a more intelligent, critically minded member of a dynamic society.

From the viewpoint of the curriculum.—The desire to "cut across" traditional subject-matter divisions and to "integrate" elements extracted from the various disciplines, e.g., to bring together in one course, or several courses, important bodies of principles and understandings to be found in the areas of humanities, social studies, and natural sciences.

From the viewpoint of method.—The utilization of pedagogical techniques, such as the "problem" method, designed to convert the student from a "passive" listener to an "active" doer in the classroom; similarly, the application of measuring devices to gauge growth and progress not only in school work but also in extra-curricular activities, vocational interests, and student personality. This would involve such aspects of student behavior as social responsibility, emotional maturity, critical thinking, etc. "Integration" would thus be applied not only to subject matter but to human material as well.

The amount of variation described above is to be expected. General education is a scheme of education and is engaged in the process of translating its theoretical formulations into practical realities. Since conditions vary with respect to time, place, faculty personnel, and student body, we can look for experimentation to go on continually and for modifications to be made accordingly.

This prospect affords a measure of hope and optimism, hope in the sense that the door has not been tightly shut in the face of foreign language offerings within a program of general education. At this point, we may well be confronted by such questions as: Are these offerings feasible in such a program? Are they not in themselves specialized education rather than general education? If they are, can there be a harmonious relationship?

Before attempting to deal with these questions, it would perhaps be well to describe briefly one reason for the appearance of general education as a movement in recent years. Examination of the history of higher education since World War I not only serves to bring into sharp focus the historical and sociological influences which have played a part in the genesis and development of this movement but also sheds light on what may be considered the present-day consequences of two divergent streams of philosophical orientation, based upon

social and economic distinctions between "class" and "mass."

Large numbers of students, who until recently have been untouched by higher education, are now seeking admission to college. The basic drive has been economic. Whereas in former years, a high-school diploma was desirable or necessary for a job in business or industry, today a college degree is called for.

The liberal arts college at its inception and during its subsequent evolution, first in Europe and later in the United States, was essentially an upper-class institution, catering to the landed gentry and the wealthy upper-middle class, from whose ranks were recruited the leaders of society. Certainly, these elements did not need a B.A. degree to get a job. Theirs was an education calculated to prepare one to enjoy leisure profitably. The middle class tried to ape its "uppers"; hence the predominance in the liberal arts college of a mixture of upper- and middle-class cultural values.

While these forces were at work in the social and economic spheres, fermentation was also going on in the field of scholarship. Refined methods of research were adding treasures to the storehouse of knowledge. This increase in knowledge resulted in a continuous bifurcation of subject matter, in a growing number of fields of specialization, in still further investigation, and in seemingly greater fragmentation of subject matter.

Moving right along with this scholarly "excavation" and keeping pace with it was the growing interest in psychology and human development. Psychology came to the aid of those who saw the student swamped by a seemingly overwhelming dose of subject matter (in "fragmented," "atomized" form). The student—the "whole" student, his needs, interests, and abilities, the student as an individual and as a future citizen and useful member of society—assumed paramount importance, as against the subjects to be assimilated by him.

General education can perhaps be said to be at the estuary formed by the convergence of the various streams enumerated above. The moving force which gave power and direction to the movement was the fermentation caused by the social and economic changes, the addition and refinement of the subject matter to be mastered, and the new light which psychology shed upon the complex personality of the learner. In this rather complicated configuration of factors (although simplified here) the problems presented for education therefore seemed to resolve into the following:

1. How to make large numbers of new college students (new in the sense of having come from hitherto untapped segments of our society) happy in a new environment; or, in "class" terms, how to make many lower-middle-class students comfortable and well adjusted in a socially and culturally "upper"-class atmosphere.

2. How to make our cultural heritage available to these students to the optimum degree, without having them get lost in a welter of diverse subject matter, without causing them to suffer from a lack of wholesome educational balance.

Hence the term "general education" and the opposition of some educators to what they considered premature specialized education. Hence the unhealthy antagonism which has crept in, in certain quarters, between the faculties of general education and liberal arts, respectively. Hence the unwelcome deduction and unwholesome distinction: liberal education for the "classes" and general education for the "masses." Hence, also, the concern of foreign language teachers, who feel that, as a result of this whole general education movement, foreign languages are being considered "impractical" and, at best, a "cultural adornment."

One rather important fact seems to have been lost sight of: it has been assumed by some—or perhaps many—that general education, as it is envisaged today, is something apart and distinct

from liberal education. The former is supposed to be "integrated" and to cross subject-matter lines; the latter is "fragmented" and too "specialized." As a matter of fact, "fragmentation" need not characterize liberal education. It is merely an unfortunate development in an age of specialization, which has resulted in the oft-quoted "counter cafeteria" style of "shopping" for credits. This is a weakness which general education has been quick to seize upon and exploit for its advantage. Actually, all the elements necessary for general education can be found in the liberal arts curriculum. If liberal education were to undertake a reform of its curriculum, it is quite possible that the "heavy guns" of the "separatist" general educationists (i.e., those who consider themselves to be in competition with a liberal arts program) would be spiked. For the objectives of both general and liberal education are so close as to be able to be merged. One of the things needed is the will and the interest so to organize the courses as to make possible broader offerings. Moreover, general education should not necessarily be limited to the freshman and sophomore years; no, it can be made to go on continually, in varying proportions during other years, side by side with "specialized" education. General education in the terminal, two-year college can stand by itself, although such programs also need to be liberalized to withstand vocational pushes.

II

When the question is asked: What values does general education seek to transmit to the students? it should also be asked of those who teach foreign languages and literatures. The answer in both cases is probably the same. General education maintains that it is interested, among other things, in the humanities. Foreign literature can, indisputably, claim its rightful place among the humanities. Wherein, therefore, lies the conflict? The advocate of general education will probably reply that, in view of the pressure of time, there is not enough to "make room" for foreign languages and literatures. This is the case irrespective of whether general education is confined to a two-year college or combined with a four-year liberal arts college. When do you expect the students to study literature in the foreign language, the general educationist will go on to ask, if, e.g., they do not know that language in the first place? We certainly do not think the students ought to begin the study of a foreign language in college, since, by the time they are ready to study literature, it will probably be too late; they will be on the point of graduating. We must, therefore, concludes the general educationist, teach foreign literature in translation. Let the student get all the values to be derived by studying that literature in English. The student is certainly not going to study foreign languages on *my* time, at the expense of *my* curriculum.

When *is* the student to begin the study of a foreign language? Is he perhaps to begin it on the secondary-school level? It is well known that many high schools complain of foreign language requirements set up by the colleges. It is also well known that language requirements have been dropped in many colleges, and the study of foreign languages on the secondary-school level has declined even more. Behold, therefore, the situation which results: If the student has had no language study in the high school, or in the first two years of college because the general education program does not allow for its inclusion, then he is compelled to begin a foreign language in his junior year of a four-year program. Let us assume further that if he studies that language for two years—an absolute minimum before literature can really be enjoyed—he will be ready to *begin* his readings in the foreign literature precisely when he receives his Bachelor's degree.

It would seem that the student, instead

of not being permitted to take any foreign language at all on the secondary-school level, as is the case in many places, should, on the contrary, be allowed to study it for an even longer period of time than he is permitted to do at present. In that way he will be ready to *read* literature when he enters college. In that way, college instructors will not have to spend so much time teaching materials which should properly be taught on the high-school level. Students will be able to plunge right into the literature and relate it to the remainder of their work in the humanities. It would seem, therefore, that foreign language teachers must re-examine and revise their defense positions and assume an offensive on another front. Instead of relying on the old argument that the study of foreign language strengthens the mind, they would do well if they could show, instead, that the teaching of literature in the foreign language is a valuable asset to the program of general education.

Teaching a foreign literature within the framework of a general education program will require considerable readjustment on the part of the language teacher. Less emphasis may have to be placed, in this type of program, on esoteric details; there will be less feverish activity and concern about "ground to be covered," about minute grammatical distinctions. Let this be reserved for students who may wish to concentrate in foreign languages and literatures. What will have to be stressed, instead, are broad movements, primary authors, and human values. Not only language majors but also future social scientists, scientists, experts in commercial practice, and future leaders in technology will in this way be enabled to *read* a foreign literature.

However, in our efforts to "integrate," in our desire to get away from excessive "fragmentation," we must be careful not to fall into an error of the opposite tendency. "Integration," "fusion," and "correlation" may often result in highly diffused and watered-down materials. May not important and valuable segments of subject matter be ignored or lost sight of in the process? Just how "general" ought general education to be, anyhow? A course in English, dealing, e.g., with Plato, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy, may lack continuity and connectedness. If this is done in the name of general education, if solidity is sacrificed to popularization, if standards of excellence are allowed to drop, then regrettably enough, instead of the whole loaf with which we should obviously be very happy, we shall not even have half a loaf. It is certainly commendable to be able to organize a course in the humanities which would include the Bible, Greek tragedy, Chaucer, Goethe, Cervantes—all in English. But is *Faust* representative of the German contribution to world culture? Does Cervantes give the student a general picture of Spanish literature and civilization? Does Dante do it for the Italian? Does Voltaire for the French? No. Do we therefore recommend that this type of course be dropped as unsatisfactory? No. But add courses in foreign literatures, in the respective languages. Make it possible for the student to enjoy reading in at least one foreign literature. Foreign language teachers want, through such study, to develop within the student an appreciation for a culture other than his own and thereby make him more receptive to humanizing influences.

Does this seem to be an exorbitant claim? Some have maintained that the objectives of foreign language teaching may be correct for some, but not for *all*, students. They hold that foreign language teachers have been advancing exaggerated claims.[1] But this argument

[1] Harold B. Dunkel, "Determining the Place of Foreign Languages in General Education," *Journal of General Education*, VI, No. 1 (October, 1951), 59. In speaking of the alleged values of foreign language study, Professor Dunkel writes: "If one takes these statements literally [i.e., the claims made for foreign lan-

is a double-edged sword; the same argument can be advanced against general education. There is no guaranty that *all* students will be *equally* affected by what general education is trying to accomplish. All we can do, regardless of the particular subject we teach, is to try to achieve the maximum.

The effort of the foreign language teacher to develop to a greater degree the process of humanization in his students finds a sympathetic response among those concerned with general education. For general educationists themselves wish to break down the spirit of provincialism, so characteristic of people who have not yet matured in the fullest sense of the term. One group makes this point in a statement of objectives: "Our aim is to enable the student to recognize the diverse nature of group ideals in different cultures, the various norms of behavior, to avoid parochial outlooks, and thus, to appreciate the differences as well as the interrelatedness of the cultures of the world."[2] The Boston University committee responsible for the above statement goes on to quote Dean B. Lamar Johnson of Stephens College as saying: "The final test of this program is changed behavior, motivated by the student's desire to improve himself and society."[3]

Is it not conceivable that the study of at least one foreign language and literature will go a long way in helping to achieve this type of "changed behavior"? What type of society is envisaged here? Only an English-speaking one? Is this the way to become a better citizen of the world? Or do we believe that it is not necessary to know another foreign language in order to be intelligent about the world? The Boston University committee would seem to go along with the point of view expressed in this paper when it makes mention of the following two objectives to be realized, under the heading of "Aesthetic Attitudes and Experiences":

1. To achieve a sense of appreciation and enjoyment of the literature, music and art of Western civilization.

2. To achieve an understanding of the social history and cultural background of other ethnic groups through an examination of the literature and music and art of such groups.[4]

How is this to be achieved? By plucking at one author here and snatching at another there? By jumping from ancient Greece to the Italian Renaissance, from the French Enlightenment to Victorian England? Is the way "to achieve an understanding . . . of other ethnic groups" to leave out large and important segments of meaningful literary creativity? Can one grasp the essence, the flavor, of the cultural background of these ethnic groups if one is to be satisfied with English translations in a diluted program?

We have been speaking of the study of foreign literature in the original, as the chief issue. However, even from a purely linguistic point of view, familiarity with a foreign tongue will serve to introduce the student into the rich manifold nuances in which people create. Since language is the reflection of the thinking and feeling of a people, its psychology and cultural history, a knowledge of a language other than one's vernacular may be greatly instrumental in developing within the student a feeling of empathy, whereby he learns to appreciate that people's moods, its humor and pathos, its manner of expression. Shades of meaning discovered in the foreign lan-

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guage study], they appear to assert that any and every student who studies a foreign language attains such-and-such a value, or attains such-and-such an objective. As universal assertions of this sort, the claims are probably all demonstrably false" (p. 61).

[2] Quoted from a mimeographed statement on "Objectives in General Education," made by a Committee on General Education, at Boston University, February, 1952.

[3] From a forthcoming report of general education in the California junior colleges.

[4] Quoted from a revised statement submitted by the Committee on Objectives in General Education, Boston University, March 25, 1952.

guage and compared to equivalents in his own will bring the student into closer and more sympathetic contact with the foreign people and their aspirations and will develop a more refined sensitivity for the "color," the "shape," and the "scent" of their contribution to society. Merely rolling the foreign words off the tip of one's tongue with enjoyment may serve as an opening wedge which will eventually lead one out upon the road toward deeper understanding of the people for whom that foreign language is the vernacular.

This enriching experience is known to have been realized in the elementary school. If only this enthusiasm which parents can see in the young children studying, say, Mexican life, could be extended to the secondary-school level, and even higher! The trouble is that, as boys and girls grow older, they become more and more "sophisticated" and lose that fine initial spark of wanting to know, just for the sake of knowing and the inner satisfaction that comes with knowing. The older they get the easier it is for them to accept the argument that the study of a foreign language is not "practical"; that it's a "waste of time"; that it "doesn't pay off"; that it's not going to "get you anywhere."

It would seem evident from the foregoing that an entire re-examination of the role of foreign languages and literatures is called for with respect to the relationship these bear to the program of general education. General education has everything to lose by excluding foreign languages and literatures from its prospectus. On the other hand, foreign language teachers should welcome the advent and extension of the general education movement as being a genuinely democratic, peculiarly American phenomenon. They not only should seek to improve their present status in the liberal arts colleges but should use the same strategy to work out ways and means of functioning effectively within the framework of general education. Instead of resenting the "newcomers," they should seek to convince the general educationists that they, too, are interested in student growth and effectiveness, in the "integration" of all phases of the student's personality.

It is precisely at this great historic moment when the United States is being called upon to shoulder ever increasing responsibilities, involving various peoples of the earth, that there are powerful influences in educationist circles which would extend and reinforce our linguistic insularity. Our past geographical isolation and our real and fancied superiority in many areas are factors which have caused our great masses of so-called "intelligent" citizens to say: "Let others learn English. We don't have to learn their languages." Surely, this is something which our "educationists" ought to see and try to correct.

Why be satisfied with a minimum when we can aim at a maximum? This is the real democratic, humanistic approach: to make as many as possible, rather than a select few, advance, develop, and mature. In fact, it is ironic that the general educationists who like to think of themselves as being more "democratic" and as being concerned with the great "masses" of students, as opposed to the liberal arts faculties who are often characterized by the former as being traditionalist, "ivory-tower snobs," these general educationists may yet find themselves in the uncomfortable position of being labeled "undemocratic," in the sense of not showing sufficient faith in the ability of the great masses of students to receive a liberal education.

THE TEACHER IN A GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Nathaniel Cantor

GENERAL education as a movement in the secondary and higher levels of education arose about thirty years ago as a reaction against overspecialization in subject matter. The need for specialization and the pressure of vocational interests had increasingly crowded out a consideration of fundamental human values. So much time and effort were required to prepare students for the professions of engineering, medicine, law, nursing; for business, industrial, and management vocations; for more intensive scholarly pursuits in the graduate schools, that not much time was left, nor was much effort given to an understanding of the meaning of much of it. It was enough that students were being prepared to earn a good living without being concerned about the meaning of a good life.

Some of us have finally caught up with Plato and Socrates. We want, again, to raise and to try and answer the questions, "What is excellence?" "Who is a good citizen?" "By what beliefs shall we live?" "What does it mean to be educated?" The slow, confusing and tortuous development of the general education movement represents the present, provisional answers to these vital questions.

A discussion of the meaning of general education involves many dimensions that merge into one another. Consider an aim of education as stated by the President's Commission on Higher Education: the student should be prepared for a "personal and civic life . . . based on ethical principles consistent with democratic ideals."[1]

A critical examination of the unexpressed assumptions in this statement would fill volumes. The complexity of the problems of general education can be appreciated merely through listing some of the areas involved. For example:

1. What should the content of general education be? What criteria are used for selecting content? The question of criteria involves one's aims for general education.

2. Is the aim intellectual comprehension or the development of social attitudes or a change in student behavior or some combination of all three? Ethical norms are certainly involved.

3. If agreement has been reached on the content and aims of general education, what is the most effective curriculum arrangement? Should effectiveness be judged by student interest, by faculty competence, by costs of administration, extent of physical plant, inherent difficulties of subject matter? Each of these criteria merits consideration, but in exploring them some may be found to be mutually exclusive. Choices have to be made, and again we are led to the criteria of choice.

4. Another dimension involved in a discussion of the problems of general education concerns methods of teaching. New insight has been gained into the processes of learning and motivation

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[1] President's Commission on Higher Education, *Higher Education for American Democracy* (6 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947), I, 50. Also published in a single volume (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949).

which has far-reaching implications both for teachers and for students. What methods of instruction are more likely to help students develop motivation? Learning about values does not necessarily involve a commitment to values.

5. Curriculum arrangement presents another series of difficult problems. For example, it has been easier to arrange offerings in the humanities and social sciences than in the natural sciences. General education courses in physics, chemistry, and mathematics have not, generally, been considered successful.

6. Finally, the problem of finding or developing staff to understand and to teach general education is one which has by no means been solved.

While there is considerable disagreement on the means of carrying out a general education program, there seems to be general acceptance of the over-all goal. There are two summary statements in the President's Commission report with which all students of general education would probably agree. They are: Knowledge is a means to a "more abundant personal life, and a stronger, freer social order";[2] and "The first goal in education for democracy is the full, rounded and continuing development of the person."[3]

Any general education program in the United States rests on the assumption that the purposes of liberal democracy must be served. All agree on the broad function or purpose of general education. Wide differences appear, however, when the goals are stated specifically and when the means to obtain the goals are detailed. For example, the content, goals, and means of the prescribed program in general education at the University of Chicago differ markedly from the content, goals, and means of the elective program in general education at Sarah Lawrence College. One emphasizes the training of the mind through an intellectual, rational grasp of selected parts of the intellectual history of ideas; the other emphasizes student development not only in the light of the discipline of ideas but also through patterns of behavior worked out in practice and personal living experience. One asks: "By what methods and what kinds of things should you know?" The other inquires: "How is your knowledge going to be used?" One looks to our intellectual heritage as a clue to an educated mind; the other seeks for directions in education through the modern psychological, sociological, and anthropological discoveries. One makes only a subordinate use of the performing arts; the other makes them primary. One stresses the common humanity of students; the other stresses their individual differences.

In other words, when we attempt to define precisely, in particular education contexts, what are the means and purposes of general education, we discover mutually exclusive assumptions, fundamentally different philosophical, sociological, and psychological presuppositions held by various colleges. President Harold Taylor has aptly referred to such differences as the rational, neohumanist, and instrumental views of general education.[4]

Those of us vitally concerned with general education are, nevertheless, challenged to analyze and to communicate the rationale of our respective positions for the criticism of all. Wider agreement or, at least, a clarification of differences may result.

It seems to me that the most important problems of general education revolve around the attitudes, knowledge, and teaching skill of the instructor. The

[2] *Ibid.*, I, 49.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[4] See President Taylor's chapter in *Fifty-first Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Part I: *General Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952). This study, in my opinion, is one of the best surveys and analyses of the problems in general education.

teacher is the keystone of a general education program.

The construction of a syllabus and the re-formation of reading lists are relatively unimportant; discussion regarding the focus of general education, whether it should aim at intellectual comprehension, the development of social values, or student behavior is, I think, also relatively unimportant. All three goals are implicit in any educational program. Ideas, attitudes, and behavior, whatever the degree of integration, are aspects of all learning situations. The organism reacts as a whole in every situation.[5]

Whether and to what extent content should be prescribed or made elective is not very important. Subject matter can be approached through formal courses or informal projects, prescribed or elected or in combination.

The ongoing and final success of a general education program depends upon the teachers of the program. All of us would agree, I think, that what happens to the student as an individual and as a member of the community is the final test of any educational effort.

The teachers, it follows, must have an understanding of the teaching process, must possess the skill and artistry to employ it, and must care about what is happening to the student and what is happening in the world. The teacher may or may not be a scholar, but, at least, he must be educated.

The profession of teaching is an ethical profession. The community, the students' parents, the students, and the teachers all have something at stake. We want to preserve certain values, modify others, or introduce new ones. We have to make choices, and we must justify our goals. To deny, in or out of the classroom, that this is so is itself a moral commitment. It is also an absurd denial of psychological realities. Instructors and students in relation to each other are inevitably engaged in interpersonal reactions. We act and react toward each other by the very fact of being together. Modulation of voice, lifting of eyebrows, shrugging of shoulders, sensitivity to what is not said and to what lies behind what is said, how we deal with silence or apparent indifference, the contagious enthusiasm or deadening monotony in the sharing of ideas—these and scores of other psychic-motor tensions set up a steady stream of eddies and cross-currents of feelings both in instructor and in students.

Value judgments are implicit in any human association, and they are implicit in the problems and data we select for discussion and in the manner in which we discuss them.

The foregoing comments are relevant to the pivotal role of the teacher in education. Content, courses, and carefully stated aims do not constitute general education. They are necessary conditions for, but do not guarantee, an education. Emphasizing a period of the past or concentrating upon a problem of the present is, in itself, not general education. Reading, or even studying, great books or great paintings or modern symphonies or Gregorian chants is not general education.

We agree that certain subject matter and techniques must be acquired as tools of analysis. The ability to distinguish evidence from opinion, i.e., what follows validly from what, is a *sine qua non* of critical thinking. This is not general education. Possessing ideas may become a form of intellectual Ping-pong, but being possessed by ideas makes living a moral challenge.

The distinguishing quality of general education is a point of view which rests on the sacredness of truth and the essential dignity of fellow-creatures. The terrible predicament of Western civilization, which has penetrated the entire world, is due, in broadest terms, to the relationship between the means and the

[5] Many of the analyses of general education would be more fruitful, and a great deal of the confusion obviated, if we avoided oversimple dichotomies. The genuine issues are often beclouded by "either-or" alternatives as to content, method, and purposes.

ends of our culture. Scientific and technological progress has given us the power which we are using to destroy one another. There is a lack of moral direction. We have succeeded as scientists, but we are failing as men.

Economic and technical reconstruction are imperative, but they are instrumental. Instrumental toward what ends?

Those of us who are loyal to scientific inquiry canot accept any ends inconsistent with the nature of man as discovered by scientific inquiry. The social sciences reveal that man's nature is not fixed but reflects a particular historical and cultural setting. An analysis of contemporary society reveals how men can use instruments of power to crush one another. This is consistent with the nature of man in the twentieth century of totalitarian government. An analysis of contemporary society reveals also how men can use instruments of power to help one another. This, too, is consistent with the nature of man in the democratic societies of the twentieth century. In brief, the descriptions of science are morally neutral so far as choice of direction is concerned. What, then, determines our choice?

This fundamental problem brings us back to the importance of the teacher in the general education program. The teacher must be one who, loyal to science and aware of the nature of man, is willing to examine the consequences of alternative moral directions.

The spiritual roots of American teachers extend more or less deeply into the soil of American democracy. We have to live by some values. Historically, we are democratically oriented. That is the given. Our democratic postulates are not derived from science but from our society, more directly from our parents and teachers. They are not derived from science, but their implications and consequences can be rationally examined by science. In the light of our limited, but best, knowledge, what consequences are likely to follow from moral direction A, B, or C, and how can they be realized? The desirability of the consequences is judged in accord with our given democratic beliefs. There is no more need to ground our given values on ultimate moral "principles" than scientific judgments of facts need to be based upon first truths or the final logical proof for induction.

Our teachers alone cannot rebuild society, but they can prepare future leaders by helping them to assimilate ideas and to develop attitudes which can make some difference in meeting the concrete critical issues they now face and will face. The temptation of the fleshpots may be modified by the visions of Plato—and their own.

There are many problems in constructing a general education program. Most of them relate to the structure or to the administration of the program. Most of the discussion in general education relates to such problems, and they are important. The final outcome, I submit, depends chiefly upon the teacher. He directs the teaching-learning process. The teacher, I am convinced, must understand the ways in which learners organize their experience, what is involved in genuine motivation and genuine learning. The gap between knowledge and learning or understanding is indeed a wide one. Talking is not teaching, and listening or talking is not learning. (Indeed, talking, for teachers, students, and most adults, is one of the chief defenses employed to escape the fear, risk, and conflict in reorganizing self.)

The skilled instructor must learn how to proceed from transmitting facts to helping the student translate the data into contexts meaningful to him, the student. The student cannot ingest knowledge symbols unless he is able to locate in his own experience the reality to which the symbol refers.

Dr. L. K. Frank has stated:

> The dilemma of education arises from belief in man as a rational being in whom emotion can be controlled by reason and

intelligence. Educational programs shrink from any frank acceptance of the underlying personality make-up and emotional reactions of students as entering into the educational situation because to do so would bring a widespread collapse of the whole educational philosophy and undermining of approved pedagogy.[6]

A. N. Whitehead puts this in another way. The attempt to educate by reason, independently of understanding and dealing with the emotional contexts, is "one of the most fatal, erroneous and dangerous conceptions ever introduced into the theory of education."[7]

The teacher must understand the profession of teaching and the psychology of learning apart from what he teaches.[8]

The problem of learning how to help students to learn will not take care of itself over a period of time. Unsupervised poor teaching rarely improves. It becomes axiomatic by force of settled habit.

Through increased skills in teaching, the instructor in a general education program is more likely to accomplish its purpose of helping students better to understand themselves and their world and to become more willing to assume the responsibilities and risks involved in genuine change and growth.

"Only so much do I know," declared Emerson, "as I have lived." The final test of a general education program is to be found not in what teachers and students think, say, or write but in what kinds of people they become and how they behave as a consequence of their education.

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[6] "Dilemma of Leadership," Psychiatry, II (August, 1939), 247.

[7] *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 9.

[8] The following studies will give the interested reader a good view of what is meant by the "profession of teaching" and "the psychology of learning":

Earl Kelley, *The Workshop Way of Learning* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951).

Marion Rasey, *This Is Teaching* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950).

Carl Rogers, *Client-centered Psychotherapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), chap. ix.

K. O. Benne and B. Muntyan, *Human Relations in Curriculum Change* (New York: Dryden Press, 1951).

Journal of Educational Research, XLV, Nos. 2 and 3 (October and November, 1951). A series of studies reporting empirical research on teaching techniques.

Nathaniel Cantor, *The Dynamics of Learning* (2d ed.; Buffalo: Foster & Stewart, 1950).

Nathaniel Cantor, *Learning through Discussion* (Buffalo: Human Relations for Industry, 1951).

A LECTURE ON VEBLEN

David Riesman

THORSTEIN VEBLEN is an author whom we fit into Social Sciences 2 at some expense to the author and to the course.[1] He belongs in the sequence of men we have been considering who concern themselves with historical or developmental questions on a large canvas. Like Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, he is interested in industrial civilization and in the ways in which it shapes its denizens. But Marx dealt with this problem by great and passionate indignation, channeled, if not veiled, by a belief in science and a gluttony for fact; and Weber approached the question in a mood of stoical resignation and with a profound ethics of scientific detachment. Veblen employs a stance which is much less frequent: the stance of irony. I have sometimes been puzzled why students have not enjoyed *The Theory of the Leisure Class* as much as they might. Perhaps the reason is that his thought has become familiar to the educated population; his devilishly ironic phrases, such as "innocuous desuetude" or "conspicuous consumption" or "captains of industry," have passed into our current speech and consequently, like any much used and abused metaphor, lost their sting; much of what he says no longer appears as startling or iconoclastic as it once did.

[1] The second course in a three-year sequence in the social sciences in the College of the University of Chicago, described in David Riesman, "Some Problems of a Course in 'Culture and Personality,'" *Journal of General Education*, V (1951), 122–36.

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But Veblen's irony is possibly an additional paradoxical reason why you find him unrewarding. It may be that you feel that matters are too serious to justify a playful tone; that the moral climate of the pecuniary culture is no laughing matter; that old Veblen should come out from behind his beard and declare himself on the side of the righteous, or at least on some side. Conceivably, you find his style too literary for a course in social science; and there is no doubt that Veblen's economist colleagues—for he was an economist and taught here in the University of Chicago during the period in which he wrote and published *The Theory of the Leisure Class*—did not regard him as a member in good standing of their fraternity, though he was obviously more erudite than most and no less equipped to handle the conventional problems of the discipline.

Your own seriousness with respect to leisure and consumption may be illustrated by a discussion I had in one group last year while we were reading Veblen. We were talking about conspicuous consumption, and it was maintained that Cadillacs served no other purpose. These "movable sofas," as one student called them, did not meet any genuine need for speed, comfort, convenience, or beauty. They were awkward forms of exhibitionism, that was all. No one suggested that Cadillacs were pleasant cars to have and drive, though less beautiful than some other makes. Likewise, one student observed that people went to see *South Pacific* only to be seen, since it was fashionable. Again, no one dissented. But this latter judgment struck me as particularly humorless, since *South Pacific* is not only

an excellent musical play but also actually Margaret Mead's *Patterns of Culture* set to music—an anti-ethnocentric play not only in its handling of tribal culture but even more in its handling of the romance between a French planter who is well along in years, as well as having and maintaining two Eurasian children, and the spic-and-span heroine from Tulsa. When employed in this way, the Veblenian criticism of social behavior bears certain resemblances to other interpretations, whether Freudian or Marxist, which always find a hidden, less savory meaning in activity which no one any longer believes is engaged in innocently or for its own sake. I think social science runs a real danger, which we cannot guard against too much, of such overinterpretation, both of large-scale historical phenomena and of individual behavior. As with our other significant authors, we must understand them in terms of their own time if we are to escape overapplying them to our own time.

A word or two about Veblen himself. He grew up in a rural community of God-fearing Norwegian immigrants—indeed, is perhaps the most gifted specimen of the American farm-boy turned intellectual. Always speculative and curious, he must have been something of a stranger even as a boy, different in his tastes and interests—hence in the form his masculinity took—from the other slow-spoken boys around him. He went to Carleton College in Minnesota, then an institution in which most of the students were preparing for the ministry. But Veblen rejected that calling and clung for most of his life to the edges of the academic community. He was in a sense always a student. He began as a philosopher, moved over into economics, interested himself in anthropology and folklore, and wrote a brilliant book about international politics shortly after the outbreak of the first World War. Indeed, he was what would today be called an "interdisciplinary" thinker and, as such, may be thought of as one of the godfathers of such general education programs as ours which seek to deal with the great questions, if not with the great books thereon, somewhat free of traditional departmental lines.

During his lifetime, however, Veblen never found a comfortable academic home. Where other boys from similar backgrounds were successful, acquiring the intellectual and social graces to become Captains of Erudition in a short span of years, Veblen lacked what he would have regarded as the predatory or calculating powers necessary for competitive eminence. After taking his doctorate at Yale, he spent seven years of virtual unemployment, mainly supported by his wife, living on an Iowa farm, reading and ruminating and rebellious. By the time he got his first real teaching job, at the newly opened University of Chicago, where he came as an instructor in economics in 1892, he was thirty-five years old and had published several articles in scholarly journals.

The Theory of the Leisure Class, published in 1899, attracted attention, mainly in literary circles, and it is the only one of his dozen or so books to have had any circulation to speak of. He moved from Chicago to Stanford; he was not perhaps exactly fired, but woman trouble combined with doubtful views and with not very amiable attitudes toward students—he never gave higher than a C and tried to discourage students—led to his not being retained. These demons—women, views, and students—pursued him at Stanford, too, and a haven was found for him by a former student who had become chairman of the economics department at the University of Missouri. After the first World War, Veblen joined the faculty of the New School for Social Research, but by that time it was too late for recognition to heal old wounds; he remained bitter and withdrawn.

Veblen was one of a relatively small group who fought complacency in the culture of his time. But he did so in his own quite individual way. He had not the slightest hankering to go back to a pre-

industrial order; even more unequivocally than Marx and Engels, he saw industrialism as educating men in matter-of-fact behavior, getting rid of superstition, irrationality, illusion. He admired the skilled workmen, the engineers—those he thought the no-nonsense people in modern society, while, as you will see from your reading, he scorned those whose occupations either antedated the machine or sabotaged its beneficent workings. He did not have at all Max Weber's image of the West as caught in an "iron cage" of overrationality and overcontrol—but only as caught in cycles of business chicane and consumption wastefulness, of which the most wasteful and archaic sport was that of war. His utopia was a society of peaceful, mechanically minded folk, sensible, without mysticism, without fake culture, curious about cause-and-effect relations.

But if Veblen was allergic to the lords of finance, statecraft, and war who delayed the coming of his utopia, he had, unlike Marx and Engels, no great confidence that the working class would liberate itself. He thought that the envy of the rich by the poor led to a certain instability in society, but he always emphasized the ability of the pecuniary leaders to transfer psychic dividends to the lower strata, whether by giving them models to imitate or amusements to distract or nationalism to unify. In fact, his understanding of the power of nationalism to drain off a society's surplus and cause a reversion to pre-industrial modes of thought was prophetic. Dealing in 1915 with the problems of Germany and Japan, he declared that a dynastic, imperialistic state, catching up late with industrialism as developed in the English-speaking countries, would possess certain advantages in international combat. For, by the process of cultural borrowing, such countries could receive the machine process by diffusion but with a smaller complement of myths and rituals, sabotage and waste, surrounding it than it had acquired in its original home. Thus he pointed out that a German gentleman was much less expensive to maintain than that flower of the leisure class, an English gentleman, or that paragon of wastefulness, the American. Germany, moreover, lacked the addiction to sports—a relic of barbarism by which, according to Veblen, the English of all classes vigorously conspired to deplete their energies and substance. Thus Germany (and the same held for Japan) could devote a larger portion of the national product to one socialized form of sport known as war, forcing the other countries in turn into an arms race which, because of cumulative gentlemanly extravagance, they were less able to endure with stoicism.

At the same time, Germany and Japan did not have the long training in matter-of-fact thought which in Veblen's view acted as a solvent for irrational bonds of social organization. Thus it was possible for these states to be more absolutist, more authoritarian, than for countries with a longer history of and experience with industry. Democracy, which Veblen believed characteristic of some prepredatory tribes, would come back in the train of the machine, as a necessary adjunct, once production for use had swept away production (or sabotage) for purposes of pecuniary exploit and conspicuous abstention from industrial work. In a way, this is a theory of "the return of the repressed."

Because of this understanding of the international consequences of differential rates of industrialization, Veblen is sometimes given credit for foreseeing the advent of German National Socialism. This is to give him too much credit or to misinterpret Naziism as merely another form of dynastic, imperialist adventure. In his *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution* one will see that he had nothing so savage in mind, so historically new, as modern totalitarianism, though his profound sense of man's irrationality was certainly, like that of Freud, quite different from the general Victorian current of optimism and belief in progress,

whether on the part of socialists or of American civic boosters. Rather, the kind of nationalism Veblen understood was that of the older, nineteenth-century variety, and its modern versions as in the case of Japan and of the Jews. Indeed, in a famous essay on the role of the Jews in the development of modern science, Veblen, writing in 1919, observed that the Jews suffered from and had the advantages of cultural marginality. This fate endowed them with a kind of critical cultural relativism which kept them from being taken in either by the myths of the tribal group of Jews they had left or of the urban, Christian societies into which they moved. (It is clear here also that he is describing his own role.) But Veblen feared that if the Jews ever succeeded in their Zionist aspirations, they would become just another petty and quarrelsome nation and would lose the creativity and fertility given them by their present minority position among the nations.

I think you will see that Veblen, though a farm boy, did not believe in the superiority of the rural life; though a Norwegian-American, he did not believe in the superiority either of Scandinavians or of Americans. In fact, at a time when racial explanations were still current in ethnological work, he tended to reject them and to seek in environment and circumstance the sources of the varieties of national and cultural patterns. In many ways, his values were cosmopolitan values, and he fought ethnocentrism much as Ruth Benedict did.

People could have understood him better, had he been a reformer. The reformer in America occupies a familiar nonconformist role, a kind of orthodox and sanctioned meddlesomeness, like that of the minister or rabbi. But Veblen not only refused to attach himself to any reform movements but expressed again and again his skepticism concerning them, seeing them often enough as forms of conspicuous consumption. Moreover, his belief in patterns of culture—look, for instance, at page 116 of the "Modern Library" edition of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*—led him to the view that cultures were of a piece, and consequently very difficult to change; pecuniary standards at the top, for example, filtered down to almost all groups that laid claim to any respectabilit.y In this respect, he sharply disagreed with Marx's view that the workers would develop a counterculture to that of the bourgeois class; rather, he thought they would ape the standards of their economic betters. Veblen seemed in his books to enjoy unraveling these all-embracing patterns, showing what hung together with what else, in a spirit of "idle curiosity."

The concept of "idle curiosity" as a natural bent of man was, indeed, one of Veblen's greatest; he means by it a spirit of playful inquiry, unrelated to immediate pragmatic need or gain. The concept might be thought of as a defense against the all-too-practical people who wondered, both on the farm and later, where Veblen's speculative mind might lead him. We are all of us inclined to regard as idle a curiosity aimed neither at adjusting to the world nor at changing it. Yet Veblen thought that it was just such curiosity which was the main impetus behind scientific advance—an advance which, without intending it, had transformed the Western world and overthrown the schemes of many unremittingly practical men.

But nobody who has to defend himself against as many enemies as Veblen had—and, perhaps worse than enemies, as much indifference—can keep them all outside and let none of them inside his system. Thus the Veblen who saw in idle curiosity the human quality of disinterested and playful response to the world, a kind of surplus over and above any pragmatic activity, also was the man who did more than perhaps any other American to make people feel guilty about waste, about frivolous expenditure, about unfunctional behavior and consumption. While, on the one hand, he made us self-

conscious about the often joyless and strenuous nature of competitive leisure, on the other hand he tended to reinforce Puritan and ascetic strains of hostility to art and culture, since these were inevitably tainted with emulative elements.

Let me try to make this thought somewhat more clear. Veblen, applying his detached irony to our leisure pursuits—seeing them, in fact, precisely as pursuits, as the chase—is one of the Americans who have helped liberate us from some of the desperate status rivalries of an earlier day. I believe snobbery to be much less intense now than it once was, at least *within* the middle class and between the middle and the upper classes, if not between these and the lower class. The hectic extravagance that ran wild in this country from the nineties of the last century to the twenties of this has suffered from many institutional enemies, such as the income tax, but also from such cultural critics as Veblen. Veblen, moreover, taught many of us that our efforts to avoid vulgarity, to avoid the tastes of the common man, were only another and more ridiculous and difficult form of vulgarity. But, at the same time, he helped to bring about another kind of vulgarity—that of the person who dismisses all the achievements of culture as "bourgeois" and who insists that his leisure shall be untainted by any activities, such as sports, antiquarianism, or the fine arts. Such scrutiny of one's own leisure for invidious elements can lead to as much strenuousness and even self-distrust as it does for those students who cannot enjoy Hollywood movies unless they can define them as folk-art, sociological slumming, or "relaxation" in the face of comprehensive examinations. Here we see that Veblen, like the other great thinkers whose work we examine, has had ambivalent consequences, partly liberating men from older constrictions, partly responsible for new ones.

Moreover, the same Veblen who defended the peaceful, pre-predatory stage in which he believed mankind to have existed—for he studied anthropology, as Freud did, at a time when it was still believed mankind had evolved more or less steadily from primitive cultures to modern times—and the same Veblen through whose work runs a thread of appreciation for the feminine, for the nonviolent, for the gentle rather than the ruthless way of life, nevertheless acclaimed the coming to power of the Bolsheviks and what he thought of as their bold and intrepid disregard not only for vested economic interests but also for traditional cultural values and freedoms. In a book he wrote in the twenties, called *The Engineers and the Price System*, he called for a soviet of engineers, of skilled, mechanistically inclined technicians, who would take over the economy from the bankers, lawyers, politicians whom he thought of as engaged in the conscientious withdrawal of efficiency from the American industrial plant. As I shall indicate shortly, I do not believe that engineers are exempt from the culture's irrationalities, nor do I think that Veblen's strictures on the price system are fair and justified. Much of this book on the engineers now seems both foolish and sad, a testimony to Veblen's isolation and despair which led him as life wore on to become journalistically shrill, repeating much of his earlier work but with fewer ironies and qualifications. This last-named book, incidentally, on the engineers, became in the depression years the Bible of a movement known as "Technocracy."

With the depression, in fact, Veblen, now dead, came into his own as far as popular reputation went. His irreverence and pessimism fitted in well with our contemporary intellectual climate, so much so that I sometimes think that since 1929, when Veblen died, it is pessimism which has become the new complacency, even the opiate of the people, and that to be a true disciple of Veblen and other nineteenth-century movers and shakers requires one precisely to challenge today's mood of pessimism where it seems

extravagant and lacking in historical perspective.

Let us see now a bit more specifically what Veblen's picture of the pecuniary culture was. He felt that the occupations which men held shaped their consciousness: that engineers and skilled workmen would become rational and matter-of-fact through dealing with machines, whereas other groups would become calculating or predatory through dealing with intangibles, such as religion, law, "culture" in the narrow sense of the humanities, or bond issues. This was a form of "materialism" which in some ways was more far-reaching than that of Marx. Note that, whereas Marx thought that ownership or nonownership of the means of production would be determinative for consciousness—and, of course, this relationship would affect one's day-to-day work—Veblen's occupational psychology was less concerned with ownership and more with what the work actually dealt with. In this sense it was more suitable to the American scene, where the middle class is such a wide status band, with lines drawn within it less in terms of ownership than of the kinds of skills used as the source of earning power.

Bear in mind Veblen's view when you read Frederick Taylor, Elton Mayo, and Everett Hughes and when you listen to the ensuing lectures. See if your own observation leads to the view that professors of physics are necessarily more rational than professors of English or philosophy; that engineers are less given to prejudice and nonsense than lawyers; that skilled workmen are more sensible folk than storekeepers. Possibly there is some small tendency in this direction, though my own observation leads me to suppose that engineers, for instance, are no freer of myths than most people—in fact, their myth that they have no myths is one of the most striking ones. And, conversely, I have found that lawyers are often highly rational in their grasp not only of industrial organization but also of technological processes. During World War II many of the most daring and inventive developments were pushed through by lawyers against the resistance of technical men, who said it could not be done. Or, to take another example, it has often been the engineers and skilled workmen in a factory—the very groups who, for Veblen, are trained in rationality by their occupations—who have been most certain that Negro or women workers could never do a particular job; these men *knew* because they were hard-headed engineers, not soft-headed sentimentalists. But then it turned out, after the soft-headed ones had had their way, that the Negroes or the women could do the job as well as the old-timers.

In discussing such problems, Veblen was what today is called an "armchair theorist." He did not go into factories, do interviews or field work. He read books. Yet, when we consider his achievement, we cannot turn up our noses at this kind of research, out of fashion though it may be. The kind of criticism I have made of his view of engineers is, after all, in some ways beside the point. He might very well reply: "Dear Sir: I have perhaps not been pessimistic enough about the pecuniary culture. It should not surprise me, since cultures are all of a piece, that the way engineers spend their leisure—in such asininities as sport, such superstitions as gambling, such idiocies as exhibiting their unremitting capacity to spend, or their wives' capacity—that such things would, in turn, affect the quality of their work and delay the impact of that work on their consciousness. Mayhap it is only in the long run that the machine process may be expected to make those involved in it as rational as the process of conspicuous consumption and competitive strenuosity now makes them irrational. Or it may be that the penalty of America's taking the lead in industrialization is that she will also take the lead in collecting accretions and barnacles, whereas we must look to such lands as the Soviet Union to adopt machinery without adopting the hallucina-

tions which Americans believe are somehow connected with their system of production and distribution. I maintain that what men do in their waking and working hours, whether they handle machines or pieces of paper or other men, will affect their personality and view of life. And, if I am not mistaken, you yourself believe that."

I do believe it, although I also believe that the interrelations between occupation and personality are more complex than Veblen thought and that the sources of both rationality and irrationality do not entirely turn on the content of the job—whether it is machines or men or legal arguments or general education courses—but on the interpretation of that content by the culture and the traditions of the particular occupational group, its recruitment patterns, and so on. Let us remind ourselves in this connection that Max Weber also believed that modern industry was in some fashion connected with what he termed "rationalization" but that he saw this produced by the whole bureaucratic system of modern times and not by this or that particular job within the system. And, as we also know, he did not share Veblen's hope that, with the ending of pecuniary relations among men and the coming of some sort of production for use, this would in any appreciable way alter.

Moreover, in one significant respect, Veblen had a shrewd insight as to a basic occupational differentiation, namely, the division of labor between men and women in all but the lowest classes. Indeed, he saw in this division the original source of class differentiation—rudimentary in the "lower barbarian culture," as he termed it, where women drudged, laboring in and out of childbirth, while men hunted, fought, bossed, and in other ways showed themselves superior to the time-bound, space-bound diligence of the women. Men's work, that is, from very early, had a character of exploit, women's of drudgery—though Veblen does not tell us, as far as I know, how men first managed to enforce these social definitions on the women. Such a distinction can arise, however, only when there is a sufficient margin over starvation to free the man for intermittent rather than continuous contributions to the rudimentary economy of the tribe; and, by the same token, when the margin is as great as in America, women can in the leisured strata be made drudges, so to speak, of leisure, ornaments to their males' ability at modern forms of exploit, bravado, and waste. When I come across today the kind of girl who cannot read a timetable or replace an electric cord, I think of Veblen's point. And I think of it, too, when I learn that something like 90 per cent of the married women or daughters in America look to their menfolk to tell them how to vote in an election. For Veblen was unusually aware of the proxies which men and women give each other in any particular society.

Veblen was sympathetic to women as an oppressed group, even when their oppression took the form of coming-out parties, and he taught us to look for ways in which such oppressions deformed them mentally, as the Chinese or Victorian woman deformed her foot or waist for the sake of a display of conspicuous incapacity for useful, productive work as a machine-tender. Whereas Freud imputed a biological inferiority and a psychological envy to women, Veblen seems to have supposed—though he never says it in so many words—that women are really at bottom more sensible than men if men would only give them a chance.

It seems to me that, on a comparative basis, women are, on the whole, slightly less inclined than men to be fanatical, to knock themselves out for some idealism, for something that Veblen would consider transcendental nonsense. It is to Veblen's great credit that he raised such questions, which are still unsettled; it is a tribute to his quality, that he so much admired, of idle curiosity.

In fact, Veblen thought that even men, and even men in a pecuniary culture, re-

tained something of this disinterested spirit, something, too, of what he called the "instinct of workmanship," the desire to do something useful, serviceable, and workmanlike. As a result, waste must disguise itself, must pretend to usefulness, while at the same time serving emulation. He writes, in *The Theory of the Leisure Class:*

> That propensity for purposeful activity and that repugnance to all futility of effort which belong to man by virtue of his character as an agent do not desert him when he emerges from the naïve communal culture where the dominant mode of life is the unanalyzed and undifferentiated solidarity of the individual with the group with which his life is bound up. . . . Under the regime of individual ownership the most available means of visibly achieving a purpose is that afforded by the acquisition and accumulation of goods . . . the propensity for achievement—the instinct of workmanship—tends more and more to shape itself into a straining to excel others in pecuniary achievement.[2]

This may be compared with Max Weber's theory that the Calvinist, in his search for grace, for the glory of God, and for cessation of his anxieties concerning salvation, was led along the road of capital accumulation and entrepreneurial achievement.

You will trace out in your reading the steps, as Veblen suggests them, by which the prepotent warrior of the antique culture, whose hunting exploits do, after all, contribute to the viandic variety of the tribe, becomes the aristocrat whose hunting is demonstrably symbolic, even immaterial, as in hunting for erudite and useless snatches of classical "accomplishment"; and how this gentleman of conspicuous leisure, in turn, becomes the American businessman, whose combativeness is enmeshed in polite chicane and whose conspicuous leisure is delegated to his actively idle wife, his aggressively incompetent butler, and, at one or two removes, the ministers, college teachers, and museum curators who attend to his heraldic and emblematic cultural and devout potlatching in this and the next world. (I might add that, during the first World War, when Veblen for a time held a Washington job, he recommended that the manpower supply be increased by a 100 per cent tax on butlers and by getting rid of all rural storekeepers by distributing goods to farmers through federal wholesale stations rather on the order of Sears Roebuck.)

What sort of cultural analysis is this that Veblen makes here? It is—is it not?—a search for the latent meaning underneath the manifest activity, a search, in Freud's language, for the rationalizations by which we pay tribute to reason, on the one hand, while we do silly things for motives of which we are unconscious, on the other. Veblen believed that any institution, when examined closely, would exhibit a mixture of motives: thus workmanship may underlie the pains with which a gentleman appears to be casual and indolent. Sometimes he engages in what a modern social scientist might term "content analysis" of some human artifact in search of the interplay of motives as, so to speak, frozen in them. For example, he writes:

> Even in articles which appear at first glance to serve for pure ostentation only, it is always possible to detect the presence of some, at least ostensible, useful purpose; and on the other hand, even in special machinery and tools contrived for some particular industrial process, as well as in the rudest appliances of human industry, the traces of conspicuous waste, or at least of the habit of ostentation, usually become evident on a close scrutiny.[3]

I might interject here that a book by Professor John A. Kouwenhoven, of Barnard College, called *Made in America,* examines our contemporary as well as earlier architectural forms and machine designs in terms of just such a scrutiny, finding emulative elements and idle décor even in the most seemingly

[2] P. 33 of the "Modern Library" edition.

[3] *Ibid.,* pp. 100–101.

streamlined and functional factory buildings, bridges, machines, and so on, often the result of engineers importing designs from Europe to make their machines seem less "crude."

In the passage I was quoting from, Veblen continues, with that partial recapitulation which is so characteristic of his style—as if he never could quite believe he would have readers or that they would get the point:

> It would be hazardous to assert that a useful purpose is ever absent from the utility of any article or of any service, however obviously its prime purpose and chief element is conspicuous waste; and it would be only less hazardous to assert of any primarily useful product that the element of waste is in no way concerned in its value, immediately or remotely.

Veblen is saying here that men conceal from one another and from themselves what they feel and do: they rationalize as wasteful certain activities that actually serve the common good, for to be useful has often been as demeaning as being engaged in trade or industry once was. Think, for instance, of the terms "do-gooder," or "boy scout" as derogatory, and how such terms may lead us to disguise, as frivolity or exploit, predation actions which may be motivated by disinterested benevolence. In Veblen's day, at any rate, it was more typical for men to find some utility, even necessity, in actions that primarily served to keep them in the pecuniary race of intrepid spending or the occupational race of avoiding work of servile imputation. And that men seek ever so assiduously to rationalize what they do testifies, in Veblen's judgment, to the strength of the human propensity to lead a meaningful existence. In fact, it was one of the tragic ironies of the human condition that men, as soon as industry allowed them a margin above the subsistence level, engaged so energetically in dissipating that margin, using in order to do so some of the very capacities which led them to the original productivity. As a king of France let himself be roasted to death because he could not himself perform the menial office of displacing his royal body from before the royal fire, as Kwakiutl chiefs let their blankets and even homes be roasted because of emulative excess, so Veblen thought that modern pecuniary man engaged in similarly senseless displays of superiority, of which war was the most consequential and absurd roast of all.

Let us take an example of Veblenian analysis. I noticed on the financial pages a few months ago that the Lionel Corporation, makers of toy trains, had had sales of more than $12,000,000 in the first six months of 1951, up more than sixfold in a decade. Very likely, Veblen would have commented that there was a growing extravagance of children's toys, to make up, perhaps, for the fact that most women now, with servants quite scarce, have to do their own housework and so serve less well as jewel-trays and clothes-horses than they did in his day. These toys, then, would be a sign of the parents' emulative zeal to overtake and surpass one another; of the waste of metals in a time of world stringency; and, correspondingly, of training of the children themselves in emulation and waste. Yet, on the other hand, Veblen might think it a favorable omen that children are playing, not with knights in armor or with fairies or other debilitating archaisms, but with mechanical and electrical realities—useful for training in the cold, impersonal, matter-of-fact world of the machine process. But even underneath this, Veblen might find an archaic note, in that trains may be booming as toys just when they are losing their primacy as transport to planes, buses, and trucks. And he would ask whether the trains are anthropomorphically conceived, rather than with the brutal opacity of science or regarded with the snobbery and antiquarianism of Lucius Beebe and other railroad "bugs" whose fondness for trains harks back to the steam engine and early Pullman cars. These are, at any rate, the sorts of wry questions about our daily

life and leisure as Americans to which Veblen unceasingly drew our attention—most of the time, as I have observed, without any substantial hope that his ironic barbs would work any alteration in the way we spent our money and ourselves.

And yet, in spite of everything, it seems to me that he and others of like temper have had considerable effect. Conspicuous consumption has been succeeded in many quarters by what I like to call "nonconspicuous nonconsumption." I am told that the Cadillac Division of General Motors is worried that Cadillacs have been too associated with display and have altered their advertising to take account of the changed public mood. In fact, Cadillacs look more like Oldsmobiles than like the expensive cars of the twenties. The uniform that so many girls wear, blue jeans and shirts, is a kind of Veblenian manifesto that you are literally down to earth, or could be. It is no longer thought demeaning for boys of good family to work with their hands, or at least it is less demeaning, and it is certainly possible for such boys to become engineers without losing status, whereas a generation ago architecture would have been the closest one could get to construction activity without risk of disesteem. In fact, those occupations that Veblen derided as enmeshed in pecuniary calculation have suffered in the eyes of the young, and it is almost impossible today, as a recent article in *Fortune* showed, to recruit salesmen from the colleges. Medicine, which once was thought of as a rather lowly occupation, has now reached top status, in part no doubt because of its obvious utility and service aspect.

One reason for all this, in my opinion, has been the abundance, even opulence, which has overtaken this country in the last several decades. Even Veblen, convinced though he was that business sabotaged industry (and that labor unions were not far behind in this), could not envisage the enormous productivity of America under the domination of the captain of industry. He could not believe that many millions of people would have so much leisure and so much money that they could not quite go on spending them as earlier leisure classes, small minorities, had taught them to do. This American abundance has crushed beneath its weight not only Marx's vision of the increasing misery of the proletariat but also Veblen's vision of the pinched classes desperately seeking on small incomes to manifest pecuniary respectability—there are such classes in an inflationary period, and professors are among them, but their number is small and perhaps diminishing.

Finally, of course, high income and inheritance taxes have done a lot to transfer the problem of national consumption from the hands of the rich (save for a few movie actors and Texas oil and cattle kings) into the hands of the federal government. We know very well what forms of socialized consumption are prevalent today, namely, war material. Were Veblen around, he might even think it would have been better to leave spending to the rich, since their wastefulness is less destructive than war—not that I myself, I should add, feel our armaments to be futile or ill-advised as things stand today with Russia. And, indeed, many of us can look back almost nostalgically to the era when the *Theory of the Leisure Class* was written, when the irrationalities that threatened men were, as compared with today, so mild and even amiable.

But, at the same time, Veblen is one of those pioneers of social science who made it possible for us, his successors, to analyze human motivations as these are built into a going social system; to disentangle these motivations into their rational and irrational components; and to suggest that the impractical way, the idly curious one, is, after all, the way with the longest reach and the greatest influence.

THE IDEA AND PRACTICE OF GENERAL EDUCATION

An Account of the College of the University of Chicago

IN SEPTEMBER, 1931, the introduction of the Chicago Plan began a revolution in the concept of higher education which has, in the nineteen years since then, made a change in nearly every college and university in this country.

The Plan took form in the College of the University of Chicago. Its purpose was to revise the old elective system, to substitute a fixed curriculum of integrated and comprehensive courses for the hodge-podge of unrelated subjects which had, theretofore, constituted the usual, disparate undergraduate education. Its aim was to teach young men and women, not only the details of knowledge, but the coherence of knowledge and the essential meaningfulness of any moral or intellectual function.

In large part, this aim has been achieved, and this book—*The Idea and Practice of General Education*—tells precisely how. It is the most authoritative statement of the theory, the history, the curriculum, and the admissions, teaching, examining, advising, and administrative methods of the College of the University of Chicago.

This is no limited statement of educational theory. The effort throughout the book—an effort conscientiously followed by the members of the College staff who have contributed—has been to present a rigorously practical discussion of the workings of general education. Thus, an entire chapter is devoted to each subject-field, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, writing, language, history, and interrelationships of fields of knowledge. Each chapter contains a discussion of committee procedures, administrative problems, and examining methods, with frank analyses of errors that have been made. Complete reading lists for each subject-field, laboratory methods, etc., are included.

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